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ORIGIN *of the* FAR EASTERN CIVILIZATIONS:
A BRIEF HANDBOOK

By
CARL WHITING BISHOP

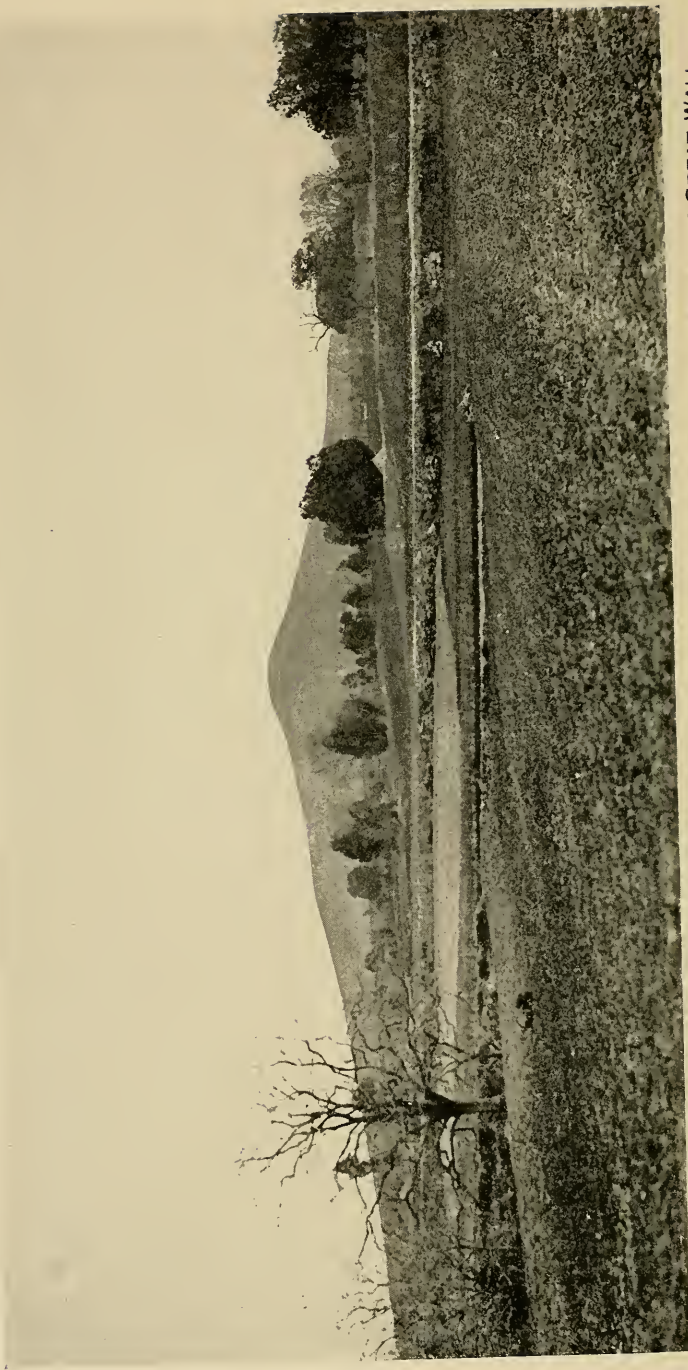


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GRAVE MOUND OF CH'IN SHIH HUANG TI, FOUNDER OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE AND BUILDER OF THE GREAT WALL
(D. 210 B. C.)

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Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

(WITH 12 PLATES)

INTRODUCTION

AIMS AND METHODS OF STUDY

Anthropology is that science which studies man in connection with his environment, physical, social, and economic. But to this end we must also lay under contribution many of its sister sciences, notably those of geology, climatology, biology, and history; for these too can throw light on various aspects of our problem—the career of mankind in ancient eastern Asia. The cultural significance of that part of the globe, moreover, like that of every other, can only be rightly understood if we view it in relation to the cultures of neighboring areas; while the growth of civilization there must, as always, be interpreted in terms both of time and of space.

CHINA

Physical environment.—As a preliminary to our survey, we need to know in at least its main outlines the geography of China; since it was there that our particular phase of the great human drama began. (Cressey, 1934, *passim*; Latourette, 1934, vol. 1, chap. 1.)

As a glance at a map, or better still a terrestrial globe, will show, the area in question occupies a position marginal or peripheral to the Near East—the region where, as we now know, civilization first developed. Ever since fairly remote geologic times, however, these widely sundered areas have been linked by two great land routes or thoroughfares of migration and travel, vegetable, animal, and human (see map, fig. 1). These pass in a generally east-and-west direction to the north and to the south respectively of the lofty tableland of Tibet. The former route, that on the north, has in general played far the more important role in human history; but the latter, known in part as the now famous Burma Road, has come into renewed prominence of late.

The sea route between the Occident and the Far East did not come into use until much later, well on in the historical period—not, in fact, until sails and seagoing ships had long been known in the Near East.

Surface features.—Northern China is preeminently a vast low-lying alluvial plain, bordered by the sea on the one hand, on the other by rugged areas that form the scarp of the central Asian plateau. The Ch'in-ling chain of hills—dwindling outliers of the mighty K'un-lun mountains of inner Asia—divides the basin of the Huai River from that of the Yangtze, and forms a faunal, botanical, and historical boundary of great importance.



FIG. 1.—The "steppe corridor" and the Far East.

Southern China, on the contrary, is in general hilly—in parts even mountainous; but its elevations do not form continuous, well-defined ranges.

Loess soil.—Over much of northern China, and extending far into central Asia, lies a thick mantle of loess soil (likewise found in other parts of the world, as for instance in many of our western States and portions of Europe). This type of soil, of a fine powdery consistency and grayish yellow in hue, is divided by geologists into two varieties, primary (eolian) and secondary (alluvial) loess. Of these, the first was deposited by the wind, in the form of dust, during the (geologically speaking) Recent epoch, since the close of the last ice age; while the second, a derivative of the first, has been laid down by water (which in this way, for example, created the great North China plains just mentioned). (Cressey, 1934, pp. 184-189 and passim; Andersson, 1934, passim.)

Rivers and lakes.—In northern China the rivers are "young" (again in the geologic sense), and are therefore subject to devastating floods. By far the largest is the Huang Ho or Yellow River, sometimes called "China's Sorrow" on account of the terrible loss of life which it often causes. This stream rises in northeastern Tibet, and is 2,500 miles in length. Too shallow and swift to be an important waterway, it has often altered its lower course, the most recent of these changes occurred less than a century ago. South of it flows the Huai River, much shorter, and the mouth of which has for the past few hundred years been cut off by the Grand Canal, so that it no longer flows directly into the sea.

The rivers of southern China, on the other hand, are "mature" in character, with deep, well-defined channels. The most important is the Yangtze, second in size and volume only to the Amazon, in South America. Like the Yellow River, it too rises in northeastern Tibet, and flows in a general easterly direction for 3,200 miles before it reaches the sea, near the present city of Shanghai. Its value as a highway of commerce is very great, and oceangoing steamers are able to ascend it for over 600 miles. In the early historical period it entered the sea through a delta with three mouths, now reduced to one.

The river systems of southeastern China are nearly all short and coastal, few of them extending back into the interior of China. There are likewise, especially in the center and north of the country, numerous lakes, some shallow and subject to seasonal fluctuations of outline while others are deeper and more permanent in character.

Flora and fauna.—The great plains of northern China were before the dawn of history probably open grassland, with belts of timber along the streams and on the watersheds—much like our American prairies in aboriginal times. The Yangtze basin and southern China in general, on the other hand, seem to have been covered with luxuriant subtropical forest continuous with that clothing Indo-China and much of India, and not unlike the one that once occupied the southeastern part of North America.

There are in eastern Asia two main zoological provinces, a northern and a southern. The boundary between these today extends roughly along the southern border of the Yangtze basin; but in ancient times it ran at least as far north as the latitude of Peking.¹

Hence as late as the second millennium B.C. China had, even in the north, many large forms, such as the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the water buffalo, now living only in regions much farther south.

¹ This parallel, of very nearly 40° N. latitude, passes through northern California and central New Jersey on our side of the globe.

Eastern Asia was, in fact, during ancient times (before human activity had yet had time to produce its usual destructive effect) a region teeming with very many forms of wildlife, both animal and vegetable. Among these, numerous species in both the animal and the vegetable kingdoms were closely related to others that we look on as especially characteristic of the New World. For instance, the only parts of the globe where the true alligator occurs today are North America and a small area on the Yangtze River. Many other examples of like nature might be cited.

There was—and still is—a bird life wonderfully rich in both number of individuals and variety of species, the latter including terrestrial, arboreal, and aquatic forms.

Climate.—The controlling factor in the climate of China—of all south-eastern Asia, in fact—is the alternating occurrence of the monsoon winds and their influence on precipitation. (Cressey, 1934, pp. 60-64 and passim.) The summer monsoon, blowing steadily from the south, off the equatorial ocean, is warm and moist, whereas the winter monsoon, from the interior of the continent, is dry and bitterly cold. These distinctions are very marked, and their effect is to divide the year rather sharply into a hot, rainy summer and a cold, dry winter.

The Middle and Late Pleistocene periods, when the vast deposits of loess soil were being slowly formed, seem in general to have been much drier than now, but to have been followed, during late prehistoric and early historic times, by an interval of rather greater rainfall and warmth than are found in northern China today. The general tendency for at least the past 1,500 years seems to have lain in the direction of growing aridity, interspersed with somewhat wetter phases. All these climatic fluctuations have influenced human activity in countless ways, the effects of which are still clearly visible.

ADJACENT LANDS

Northwest of China proper are the lofty plateau of Tibet and that nexus of mountain ranges forming the Pamirs, the "Roof of the World." North and northeast of China extend the elevated plains of Mongolia and Manchuria, wooded on the east, bare and tending more and more to aridity on the west. Other lands—Indo-China, Korea, and numerous great island groups—lie to the west, south, and east. All these, together with China itself, form that part of the globe which we know collectively as the Far East. The region is one that is playing an increasingly large and important part in world history, as we all realize.

PRIMITIVE MAN

RACES OF EARLY MAN

It is still undetermined exactly where the human race originated, although we may at least be sure that it did so in the Old World, not in the New. Recent discoveries have revealed, however, that numerous forms of man once existed, but that all save the one found today—*Homo sapiens*—eventually became extinct. (Abbot et al., 1938, passim.)

"PEKING MAN"

About one of these very early human types—whether or not directly ancestral to modern man is still disputed—we have been hearing much of late. This is the primitive creature commonly called "Peking man" (*Sinanthropus pekinensis*), which lived around the very beginning of the Pleistocene period, variously estimated at from 250,000 to 1,000,000 years ago.

MEN OF THE OLD STONE AGE

During the past few years also, traces of men of the Old Stone Age or Paleolithic period have come to light in eastern Asia, as for instance in northwestern China proper and on the borders of Mongolia. These people lived much later but still as early as the beginning of the deposition of the loess, not less than from 10,000 to 20,000 years ago. From this time onward until late prehistoric times there is a great gap in our knowledge of man in eastern Asia. Possibly he did not exist there at all then, the climate following the ice age being too unfavorable to permit living in that part of the globe by people still in a food-gathering (as opposed to a food-producing) stage of culture.

MORE RECENT RACES

NEGROID TYPES

In times much less remote from our own but still long before history began, southern Asia and some of the islands off its coast seem to have been inhabited by two dark-skinned races, one of pygmies, the other of a taller people, perhaps akin to the Papuans of New Guinea or to the aborigines of Australia.² This second race, some students have suspected,

² Of these pygmies, a few scattered remnants still exist, in the Malay Peninsula, the Andaman Islands, the Philippines, and elsewhere; and they are mentioned in old Chinese records. The larger Negroid race was perhaps best represented by the (recently) extinct Tasmanians.

once extended its influence northward as far as Japan, there to contribute to the formation of the Ainu, still found in some of the northern islands of that archipelago.

A CAUCASOID TYPE

Somewhat later but still far back in prehistoric times, southeastern Asia and many of the East Indian islands seem to have been overrun by a brown-skinned race of Caucasoid type, perhaps distantly related to the "Mediterraneans" of the west. This type may still be seen entering into the composition of the present population of the area; thus travelers often mention seeing individuals there with the aspect of southern Europeans.

MON-KHMER STOCK

The Mongoloid or yellow-brown variety of man seems to have become specialized somewhere in central Asia, and to have spread thence outward, toward the sea. The first traceable members of this race in the Far East seem to have belonged to the Mon-Khmer linguistic stock, still found in many parts of southern Asia. They spread (or were driven) southward until they occupied much of southern China, Indo-China, parts of India, and apparently some of the islands. Physically they are shorter and darker than Mongoloid man in general, possibly on account of very early admixture with the pygmies already mentioned.

SINO-T'AI STOCK

Probably a good deal later than the Mon-Khmers came the speakers of the Sino-T'ai family of languages (to which, respectively, belong the Chinese and the Siamese). These two groups of speech are very closely related to each other, and this may account in part for the success of the Chinese emigrants to Siam.³

The Chinese ancestral stock spread, at some prehistoric time, over northern China (roughly the Yellow River basin), while the T'ai speakers occupied much of the Yangtze Valley. Southern China and Indo-China became more especially the home of the Mon-Khmers.⁴

Throughout the historical period, various forms of Chinese speech have been steadily supplanting both T'ai and Mon-Khmer in southern China or have driven them into Indo-China.

³ The Siamese like to call themselves *the* T'ai (or, less correctly, Thai); but they are by no means the only people speaking a T'ai language.

⁴ All the groups of whom we are now speaking are today much alike in physical aspect, their distinguishing marks being more especially matters of speech, costume, and custom. This applies in very large measure also to the Japanese.

TIBETO-BURMAN STOCK

Yet another linguistic family, the Tibeto-Burman, is related to the Sino-T'ai group, although less closely than are the two branches of the latter to each other. As their name indicates, languages of the Tibeto-Burman family are today spoken mainly in Tibet and in Burma; but in ancient times they extended over much of northwestern China, and remnants of them still exist there. Physically this stock is very variable, though essentially Mongoloid in character.

NEOLITHIC PERIOD

Characteristics.—This stage of culture is characterized by the use of ground and polished stone for tools and implements, but it also marks a really tremendous step in man's progress; for it was then that he became a producer of food instead of depending, as he had always done hitherto, on what he could find for his nourishment, whether animal or vegetable. It was then that he began to domesticate various kinds of animals (except the dog, already associated with man far earlier) and different food plants.

This Neolithic phase of culture prevailed over practically the entire globe, only disappearing from different areas as civilization slowly diffused itself. This was true of eastern Asia as of every other region; thus the Ainu of the Kurile Islands, northeast of Japan proper, remained in that stage until well into the nineteenth century.

About the Neolithic period in western and southern China we as yet know little, for not a great deal of archeological work has been done there. Of that of northern China, Korea, and Japan, we know much more. The Neolithic inhabitants of these regions seem nowhere to have been pastoral nomads but invariably semisedentary planters. It is also interesting to note that in northern China at least the skeletal evidence shows the prehistoric population to have been directly ancestral to the present one.

Like the Neolithic culture of much of eastern Asia was the one that we find in northern China. (Bishop, 1932a.) There, however, it disappeared, or perhaps more accurately was submerged, under a developed civilization of Bronze Age type, with a knowledge of metal, considerably sooner than was the case in many adjacent lands. In parts of Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan, for example, Neolithic cultures survived until the Christian Era and even longer.

In northern China this cultural phase spread over the entire country save for areas subject to seasonal inundation or too heavily timbered for easy clearing with stone tools. There as elsewhere (for instance in Europe), the Neolithic peasants sought more especially lands covered

with loess soil, as being at once more fertile than others and less densely overgrown with trees and brush.

Habitations.—Habitations in northern China, as in so many other northern lands during this stage of progress, were pit dwellings or earth lodges, roughly circular in form and beehive-shaped, usually with a depth and diameter of around 10 feet, and entered from the top (see pl. 2).

The Chinese character *hsüeh*, now meaning a den or cave, in its ancient form clearly represents a vertical section of such a pit dwelling, with its domed and timbered roof (fig. 2). Archeology has in this instance, as in so many others, confirmed the evidence of epigraphy.

During the warmer months, which comprised the period of growth and also the rainy season, these pit dwellings seem to have been temporarily deserted for huts built in trees or on piles and aptly likened to "nests," situated near the cultivated patches.



FIG. 2.—Modern and ancient forms of Chinese character for *hsüeh* (a den or pit dwelling).

No signs of fortification of any sort have been found; and in general the Neolithic peoples, in northern China at least, seem not to have been very warlike.

Villages of these underground huts were not occupied continuously over very many years. On the contrary, as soon as the soil of the vicinity had lost its fertility through the wasteful mode of cultivation then used, and which included clearing the ground with the aid of fire, villages were shifted to other localities with unexhausted soil.

Tillage.—Cultivation was probably carried on in common, perhaps mainly by the women for magical reasons connected with the idea of fertility. The implements used were digging sticks, hoes, mattocks, sickles, and perhaps spades, shod with stone or shell (see pl. 3, fig. 1, and fig. 3). The staple crop was common millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), and many mullers and mealing stones, used in preparing this grain for human consumption, have been found. Rice also was being grown in the Yellow River basin in Neolithic times; and there is some slight (though doubtful) indication that sorghum (kaoliang or giant millet—now an important food crop) was also known then.

Beer, brewed from millet and perhaps also from rice, may likewise have been made. The method used in early times to set up fermentation was that of chewing the grain and then steeping it in water.

Animal husbandry.—In its variety of domestic animals during this cultural stage, China was far poorer than was the Occident. The latter then had the ox, sheep, goat, pig, and dog. China, on the other hand, had only the two last, though toward the close of the period the ox, sheep and

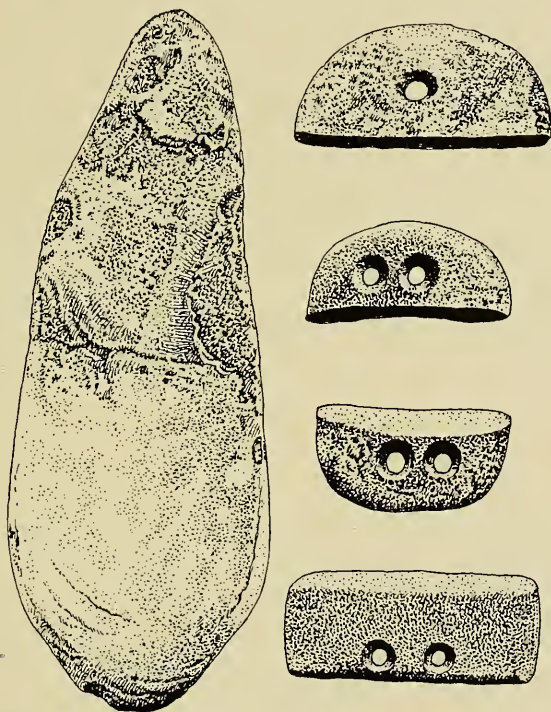


FIG. 3.—Mattock and knives of stone, northwestern China.

goats, and even the horse may have appeared (the horse, however, perhaps not as a domestic animal).

Implements and clothing.—Supplies of the right kind of stone for making tools and implements have always been of vital importance to Neolithic man everywhere. The most common implement in China, as in other lands, was the ground and polished stone celt, which occurs in two forms, the ax and the adz. A rectangular or semilunar stone knife had a very wide distribution, being found not only in northern China but also in Siberia, Japan, and even as far afield as among the Eskimo (see fig. 3).

Arrowpoints were of stone, bone, and shell; and picks of deer antler similar to ones found in Europe also occur. Spindle whorls of clay or stone and perforated needles of bone show that at least sewing was known, and perhaps weaving also, for impressions of cloth on certain ancient Chinese potsherds may possibly date back to Neolithic times. Bark cloth like the Polynesian tapa seems also to have been made; and during the cold season furs were undoubtedly worn.

Pottery.—Pottery was well known in eastern Asia during this culture phase. Broadly speaking, it falls into two great categories, a northern and a southern, the former usually ornamented in various ways, the latter most often plain.

The northern family is itself divisible into two classes. Of these, one is a coarse gray ware, sherds of which are found all over northern China and are closely akin to the pottery of the neighboring areas. Hand-made, often by the coiling process, it appears in a wide variety of forms. Ornamentation is incised, impressed, punctate, or applied, and the ware itself is as a rule poorly fired.

The other sort of northern ware, far finer in texture and apparently, in some instances at least, made on some rudimentary form of potter's wheel, likewise displays a wide range of shapes, which as a rule differ from those of the foregoing type. This finer ware occurs more especially along the great migration route from Chinese Turkistan across northern China to southern Manchuria. Varying in hue from a light buff to a dark reddish brown, it is as a rule highly burnished; sometimes it bears simple geometric designs in color, most likely with some magical or symbolic meaning.

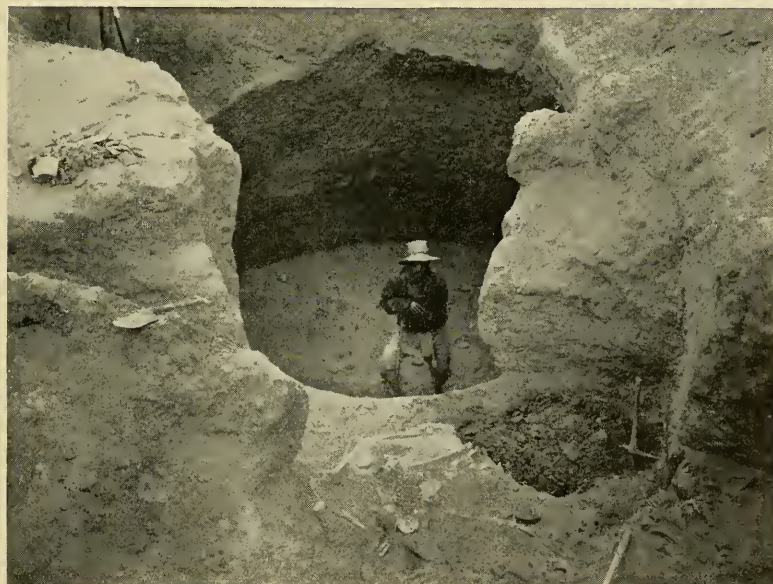
Both types of ware occur together, however, and seem to have been made by the same people. The Chinese burnished pottery gradually deteriorated, and finally died out before the dawn of history. Not so, however, with the coarse gray ware; for this kept on being made, at least by the peasantry, until well within the Christian Era.

In northern and especially northeastern China there has also recently come to light a very fine black pottery, somewhat later than the kind just discussed. It was, however, still Neolithic; for no metal has been found with it. Its exact significance is not yet clearly understood.

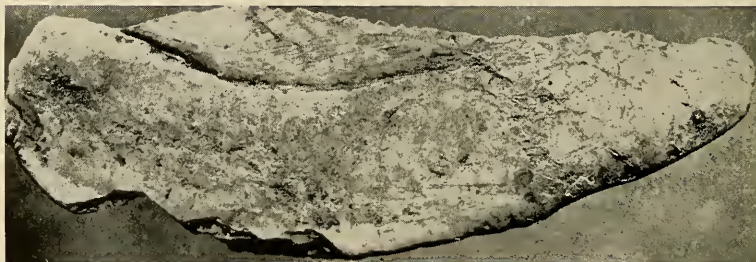
Trade.—Trade seems to have been little developed in China then, for given communities were self-sustaining. No particular demand for imports had as yet arisen. Cowry shells from the southern seacoasts and obsidian (volcanic glass) for certain implements must have been traded from considerable distances; so contacts of some sort must have existed, most probably of an indirect, "hand-to-hand" sort.



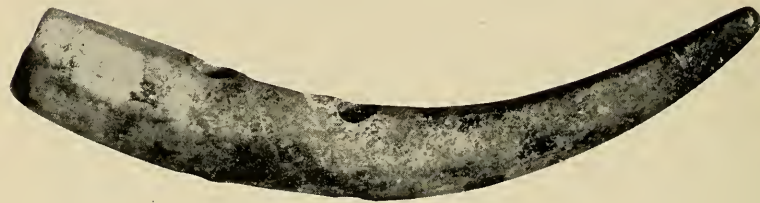
1. NEOLITHIC PIT DWELLING, BLOCKED OUT FOR EXCAVATION



2. SIMILAR UNDERGROUND HUT, AFTER CLEARING



1. SICKLE BLADE OF
SHELL WITH
SERRATED EDGE



2. TWO VIEWS OF ANTLER CHEEKPIECE
OF BIT

This form not hitherto reported for ancient China, though occurring in Europe.

Religion.—Religion in northern China, as in most lands during the Neolithic period, most likely consisted of beliefs in magic and animism and in orgiastic ceremonies for the promotion of fertility in general. In these, women probably played a large part. In China as elsewhere, indications of human sacrifice and cannibalism have been found in this connection.

The bodies of the dead were buried in the earth; for cremation has never been general in China.

Discussion.—The Neolithic stage of culture in northern China lacked many of the elements that it needed to develop into a more advanced civilization. However, it long survived the advent of the Bronze Age, and formed the basis of the peasant culture of the latter period—just as it has done in large measure during even later times.

A word may be said here in regard to the influence of bamboo on cultural progress over so much of southeastern Asia. That plant (which anciently seems to have extended somewhat farther north than now) lends itself to such a wide variety of uses of all kinds that its presence appears to have acted as a definite deterrent to experimentation with other materials, and so to further progress (see pl. 4).

The Neolithic period elsewhere in the Far East seems to have been similar in a general way to the one just discussed, though in most places without the burnished pottery. Nowhere were the people yet in a pastoral stage, with tending of flocks and herds as their means of livelihood. On the contrary they were planters, though with more dependence on hunting and fishing than in northern China. Mongolia, for instance (which today we look on as preeminently a pastoral region), seems only to have adopted that type of culture when it acquired sheep and cattle (apparently from the west, to judge from the skeletal evidence); and nomadism proper after obtaining the horse, probably not long before the middle of the first millennium B.C. The effects of the acquisition by the Mongols of the latter cultural trait, incidentally, may profitably be compared with those that took place among our own Plains Indians when they got the horse from the Spaniards.

SOUTHERN CHINESE CULTURE

Southern China, Indo-China, Malaya, and the islands off the coast, like the Netherlands East Indies, Borneo, and the Philippines, had a somewhat different type of Neolithic culture, characterized by pile dwellings (see pl. 7, fig. 1), long dugout canoes, undecorated pottery, and in many if not all areas head hunting, tattooing, and ritual cannibalism.

The peoples of these areas did some planting, more especially of leaf and root crops, but also depended greatly on fishing.

This southern culture made its way northward along the coast as far as southern Korea and western Japan, where its impress still survives. Eventually it reached a northern form of Neolithic culture more like the one just described.

CHALCOLITHIC PERIOD

TRANSITION BETWEEN STONE AND BRONZE AGES

Except in northwestern China, almost nothing is yet known about the transition from the Neolithic period to the Bronze Age. In Kansu, stone implements remained in use long after copper (or bronze?) arrowpoints and trinkets appeared, as signs of contact with metal-using peoples to the west. Burnished (and sometimes painted) pottery continued to be made, but was not as fine as before, and its designs tended to become naturalistic rather than geometric. Villages were now protected by earthen walls, suggesting an increase in warfare, perhaps even invasion from without.

In Shansi there has lately come to light still another Chalcolithic culture. This had a small amount of true bronze and also a different kind of pottery, bearing an impressed spiral design; and sheep seem to have been the principal if not the only domestic animals. Little, however, is known of this new culture as yet.

DISTRIBUTION

Both Kansu and Shensi (for these provinces see map of China, fig. 21), we should note, are situated along the eastern terminus of the more northern of the two transcontinental migration routes (see map, fig. 1). Hence the presumption that bronze and the herding of sheep had diffused themselves to China from the west (where both these culture traits had been known much earlier) becomes almost irresistible.

The Chalcolithic period in eastern Asia still forms a "dark age." In many areas, indeed, it probably never appeared at all, the transition from the Neolithic period to a fully developed Bronze Age or even to one of iron having been a direct one, without intermediate phases.

BRONZE AGE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

A Bronze Age is by no means an invariable cultural phase everywhere on the globe. It has, on the contrary, been strictly limited in both time

and space. Roughly it extended along the North Temperate Zone of the Old World, from the Atlantic to the Pacific (see map, fig. 4). Before it had had time to diffuse itself beyond this area, bronze had been overtaken and supplanted, save for limited uses, by that cheaper and more useful metal, iron.

DIFFUSION

The true Bronze Age, as distinct from the Chalcolithic period that ushered it in, began in the Near East some 6,000 or 7,000 years ago, and

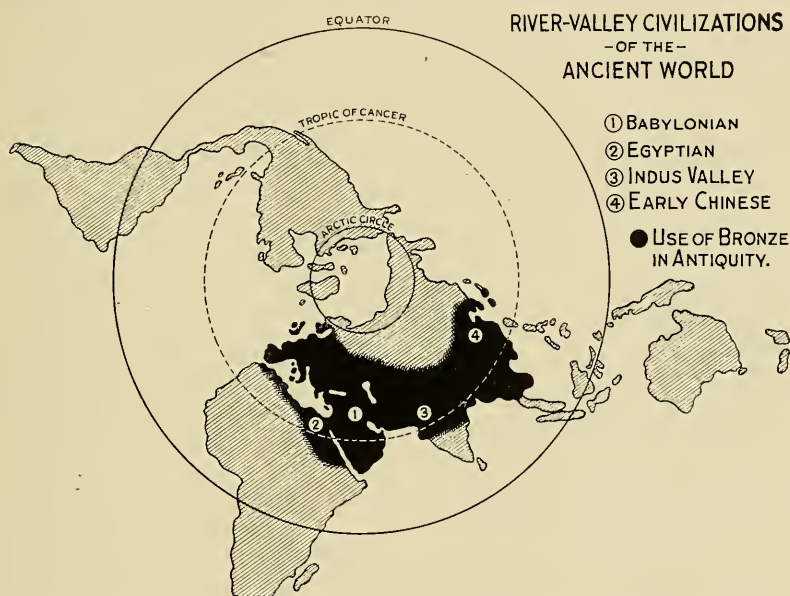


FIG. 4.—River valley civilizations of the Ancient World, showing (in black) area of use of bronze.

lasted until about 3,000 years ago, when it gradually gave way to the Iron Age. It reached western Europe and eastern Asia less than 4,000 years ago, and lasted there for about 1,500 years.

All the Bronze Age civilizations are based on the same set of fundamental elements. These were: the use of bronze itself for weapons and implements; possession of the common domestic animals and cultivated plants; knowledge of the wheel and of animal traction; and some form of writing. The spread of these cultural traits took place in various ways, through war, trade, and migration, and of course took a long time. Our present civilization has spread far more rapidly, mainly as the result of

improved means of communication and transportation. Witness, for example, the rapidity with which the airplane, invented hardly a generation ago, has reached all parts of the earth.

To return to the Bronze Age, however, the third and second millennia before our era were marked by great disturbances, widely felt in the Old World. The ancient kingdoms of the Near East fell, in most cases through invasion by peoples having war chariots and improved weapons of bronze. It was such peoples that overran and conquered Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor, northwestern India, and northern China. These movements, when traced backward, all point to the western end of the Eurasiatic steppe belt (see map, fig. 1) as their region of dispersion. Significant too is the fact that bronze weapons and war chariots appeared latest and survived longest at the two extremities of their region of occurrence—in the British Isles in the west and in China in the east, having gone out of use slightly earlier in the latter region than in the former.

BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATIONS OF THE NEAR EAST AND OF CHINA

It is illuminating to compare and contrast the Bronze Age civilizations of the Near East and of China. In the former region the development of the Bronze Age has been traced step by step out of the antecedent Neolithic cultures into the fully developed metal-using civilizations of early historical times. This evolution required at least 4,000 years and in some particulars much more than that.

Thus in Babylonia, writing, wheeled vehicles, the ox-drawn plow, wheat, and all the common domestic animals except the horse, with a complete mastery of bronze working, all existed well before 3000 B.C. In China, on the other hand, there seems to have been no knowledge of the metals before around 2000 B.C. Yet only something like 500 years later we find the Yellow River basin occupied by an already well-developed Bronze Age civilization which had most (though not quite all) of the elements known to the Near East a thousand years or more earlier. This civilization must therefore have appeared in northern China during the first half of the second millennium B.C.

Thus not only did the Bronze Age begin in China many centuries later than in the Near East, but it survived there nearly a thousand years longer. Moreover the Chinese form had from the first, apparently, a well-developed system of writing, a very skilled knowledge of bronze working, and the same domestic animals and food plants (though not yet the ox-drawn plow) as in the Near East. Also it had wheeled vehicles and animal traction, including the use of horses to draw the chariot. The

latter object, moreover, was used in exactly the same way as in the Near East, for pageantry, ceremonial, hunting, and war.

On the other hand, in China the local Bronze Age lacked certain traits characteristic of the same cultural stage in the Near East. Thus the Chinese had no dairy economy or weaving of woolen fabrics; and it was not until around the fourth century B.C. that the ox-drawn plow finally appeared there. (Laufer, 1914-1915, *passim*.)

CHINESE ORIGIN LEGENDS

Chinese legends about the origin of their civilization (the only one of which they knew in antiquity) have come down to us in late form, and do not represent genuine folk recollections, at least as they stand. They are not, however, mere inventions or fictions, but preserve, albeit in distorted form, the real beliefs held by their Bronze Age ruling classes about the beginnings of their civilization. (Latourette, 1934, vol. 1, pp. 37-40; Bishop, 1934, p. 297.)

The oldest traditions cluster about northwestern China, especially southwestern Shansi and central Shensi. This localization is significant; for the area in question is again—like the one just cited as that where the Neolithic painted pottery and traces of the earliest knowledge of metals in China occur—near the eastern terminus of the “corridor of the steppes” (see map, fig. 1). Archeologically and culturally, this region is by far the most important in eastern Asia.

THE HSIA DYNASTY

According to the orthodox Chinese accounts, the first dynasty was that of the Hsia; but of this we have neither contemporary records nor identifiable archeological remains, and some have even doubted its existence. In later (but still fairly early) times, however, the Hsias seem to have been regarded as in some sort the forebears of the ruling class during the Chinese Bronze Age; and it seems most probable that they were an actual group, perhaps a local one. (Creel, 1937, pp. 97-131.)

THE SHANG DYNASTY

The second dynasty claimed by the Chinese was the Shang. Here we are on much firmer ground, for of this we have both actual remains and contemporary written records. The Shangs seem in the beginning to have been merely one of several bronze-using groups in northwestern China, located in southwestern Shansi if we may believe an early legend. Our

oldest accounts—reduced to their present form centuries after the close of their period—declare that they shifted their capital several times.

Eventually however, perhaps about the sixteenth or fifteenth century B.C., we find them seated in the great North China plain, near the Yellow River. Here they established themselves, thenceforth to be for several hundred years the dominant group in that region. Either then or perhaps earlier the Shangs seem to have adopted numerous cultural features from the aborigines, descendants of the old Neolithic peoples; but essentially the Shangs themselves were a Bronze Age group, of rather primitive type.

In later times the Shangs were sometimes called the Yins; but there is no contemporaneous evidence that they ever applied that name to themselves.

With the Shangs, then, authentic Chinese history may be said to have begun.⁵ (Creel, 1937, chap. 3; Latourette, 1934, vol. 1, pp. 40-46.)

Nature of the Shang "empire."—The Shang "empire" meant simply the area, mainly in the middle and lower Yellow River basin, in which they exercised a precarious supremacy over as many other groups (most of them probably with a similar type of culture) as they could hold in subjection. Thus it was a mere tribute-collecting machine of the same kind as the earlier "empires" of the Near East. No evidence exists of any effort on the part of the Shangs to set up a feudal, much less a bureaucratic, system of government—forms which seem indeed to have been quite beyond their political concepts.

The Shang rulers were not emperors but kings, of a primitive priestly type, though some of them seem to have been great war leaders as well. They were regarded by their subjects as intermediaries between mankind and the Unseen Powers and as responsible for the maintenance of the due course of Nature through their observance of the proper rituals and tabus. Not the reigning king, however, but his deceased ancestors were the real power in the state. Their will was ascertained by divination, and elaborate worship was paid to them. Succession to the kingly office was of the fraternal type, from older to younger brother, not the filial one, from father to son, usual in later times.

Habitations.—Both the rural population and the city poor seem to have lived in round pit dwellings like those of their Neolithic ancestors already described. The ruling class built large rectangular timbered houses of developed type, with roofs supported by rows of wooden pillars with stone or bronze bases. (On this type of architecture, which has survived

⁵ Both Chinese and Occidental scholars agree that China's authentic and continuous history does not begin until the ninth century B.C., long after the Shang Dynasty had come to an end.

in China down to recent times, see pl. 12, fig. 2.) These structures, which in some ways recall the megaron house of ancient Greece, were sometimes erected on low platforms of rammed earth.

This last-named material was also used for walls about towns and enclosures, just as it still is in portions of China. This method of erecting walls and platforms is, or once was, common throughout the North Temperate Zone of the Old World; in Babylonia, for example, it was already at least 2,000 years old when the Shang period opened.

Dressed stone and brick did not appear in China until many centuries later. Literary references, however, perhaps based on contemporary evidence, attribute to the Shangs a varied and developed architecture.

Tillage.—The economic foundations of the Shang civilization were animal husbandry and especially agriculture. As previously noted, the ox-drawn plow was not yet known in China; but tillage was carried on by the peasantry, direct descendants of the old Neolithic population, with the aid of hoes, mattocks, and apparently foot plows, shod with stone or shell. There is also some indication that irrigation was already being practiced during Shang times.

The staple crops were wheat, millet, and perhaps rice. Of these, the first originated in western Asia, where it had already been domesticated probably thousands of years before the Shang period began. Millet was an inheritance in China from Neolithic times, and later on was the only cereal regarded as sacred—itself a sign of a high antiquity on account of the workings of religious conservatism. There is also some reason to believe that rice was grown.

Beer was brewed from millet and perhaps from rice, though as to the processes employed, we know nothing. No spirits (distilled liquors) were known in China for something like 2,000 years after the Shang period.

Animal husbandry.—Animal husbandry was also economically important. Species both of the wild pony and of the wild ass are known from eastern Asia, although neither has ever been domesticated; but evidence of the domestic horse in China in Neolithic times is wanting, just as it is, practically, in Europe during the same cultural phase. That the Shangs had it, however, there is no doubt; but they did not ride it, using it instead to draw their chariots. For in China, as in most ancient lands, the horse was driven long before it was ridden.

Shang inscriptions reveal that cattle were the most important domestic animals. They were offered in sacrifice, their flesh was eaten, and their hides made into leather; but milk was not used. Oxen were probably employed to draw carts and carry packs.

Sheep and goats were also kept. They seem, however, not to have been derived from native wild forms but from the same western ones as the domestic sheep and goats of the Occident. Sheep were sacrificed by the Shangs, though not to the same extent as cattle; and mutton was an article of diet. Wool however was not spun or woven, either then or later.

Swine were bred in large numbers, just as in Neolithic times; and dogs were both sacrificed and eaten. The domestic fowl was known, and appears to have reached China, probably by the Burma Road (see map, fig. 1) from Indo-China, during the "dark age" which followed the Neolithic period, for its remains have not been identified from sites of the latter cultural phase in China.

Trade and transportation.—A Bronze Age civilization always presupposes a considerable amount of trade, both domestic and foreign. The northern Chinese plain was, however, deficient in many kinds of raw

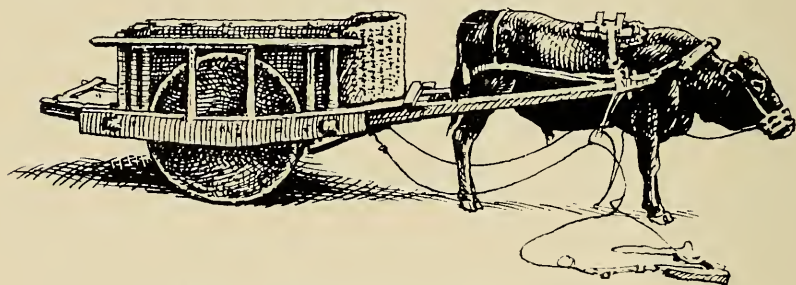


FIG. 5.—Country oxcart, a primitive survival.

materials, especially metals. And since these played an important part in the life of the time, they had to be imported from other regions, particularly from the Yangtze Valley, then and for long afterward not regarded as part of China.

Some transportation was carried on by water; but mainly it seems to have been by land, probably in oxcarts (for a modern but primitive survival see fig. 5) and on the backs of oxen, for the horse seems to have been reserved for the uses of war, the chase, and religion.

There seem to have been even then, just as there were later on, contacts with the rich metalliferous regions of the Yangtze Valley, just mentioned; and cowries (*Cypraea moneta*) and bones of the whale show that the Shangs were in touch, directly or indirectly, with the sea. The presence of jade, not known ever to have occurred in China proper, suggests that the Shangs obtained that substance from central Asia. Also, supplies of salt are necessary, for dietetic reasons, to a people subsisting mainly, as the Shangs seem to have done, on a cereal diet.

Attempts to obtain such raw materials from abroad were however often not true commercial ventures but great plundering raids, undertaken as state enterprises, with regular armies. The penetration of the Yangtze Valley by certain Shang kings was probably of this character.

Arts and crafts.—Among arts and crafts, bronze working was carried to a pitch of technical and esthetic excellence hardly if ever equaled in later times, in any land. Bronze is an alloy of copper and other metals, usually tin and lead. It is uncertain whether Shang metallurgists knew the two latter as separate metals or whether they used copper ores containing them as impurities.

The Shangs also cast magnificent bronze ritual vessels for use in ancestor worship. These vessels bear two styles of ornamentation which regularly appear in combination. Of these, one was a highly conventionalized animal style, the other geometric in design and apparently akin to the old Neolithic art of southeastern Asia. Some and perhaps all designs were thought to have magical power, especially over the weather, most important to a predominantly agricultural community such as were the Shangs. There seems nothing to suggest that ornamentation was ever applied for purely decorative effects.

The wants of the ruling class were supplied by highly skilled craftsmen and artisans of many kinds; for specialization of tasks was already being carried to a high pitch. The needs of the peasantry and of the city poor probably differed little from those of their Neolithic ancestors.

Pottery.—The painted pottery of Neolithic times had practically disappeared from northern China by Shang times, most likely during that as yet little-known "dark age" already mentioned. The coarse gray ware, also Neolithic in origin, continued however under the Shangs, as it did in fact all over northern China until well after the Christian Era. The potter's wheel was regularly employed by the Shang potters.

A limited use was also made of a kind of glaze, which, however, disappeared with the fall of the Shangs; and when glaze is again found in China it is of an entirely different type. The Shang potters also made fine white ware, neither glazed nor painted but bearing incised or impressed on its surface designs identical with those on the bronze ritual vessels just mentioned.

Among all these types of earthenware there appeared a wide variety of forms, shapes, and sizes, many of them being represented in bronze also.

Textiles.—Both hemp and silk were woven into cloth during Shang times. Hemp, we may note, occupied the place in ancient China held in the Occident by flax and its derivative, linen. Matting and basketry were also woven.

Decorative arts.—Carving, sometimes of very fine quality, was done in stone, ivory, and probably wood. Both bone and bronze objects were inlaid with turquoise or mother-of-pearl. The Shangs also did considerable carving of jade, probably then as later believed to possess magical significance.

Weapons and implements.—The weapons used in Shang times were as a rule of bronze. Socketed spears were known, and there were also two distinct types of battleaxes, each with its own method of hafting. Arrow-points of bronze, stone, and bone were also used. The bronze sword did not appear in China until very late—not, in fact, until the Shang period had closed.

Needles of bronze and of bone are also known, and knives and chisels were of bronze or stone. Agricultural tools of bronze are however almost entirely lacking; for that metal was always costly and was probably reserved almost exclusively for purposes of religion, luxury, and war.

Warfare.—Among the causes of war mentioned in the Shang inscriptions are border raids and encroachments on grazing grounds. There was also the recurring need to enforce the authority of the Shang king over the subject states that withheld tribute and submission; and expeditions were made against non-Chinese people for plunder and captives.

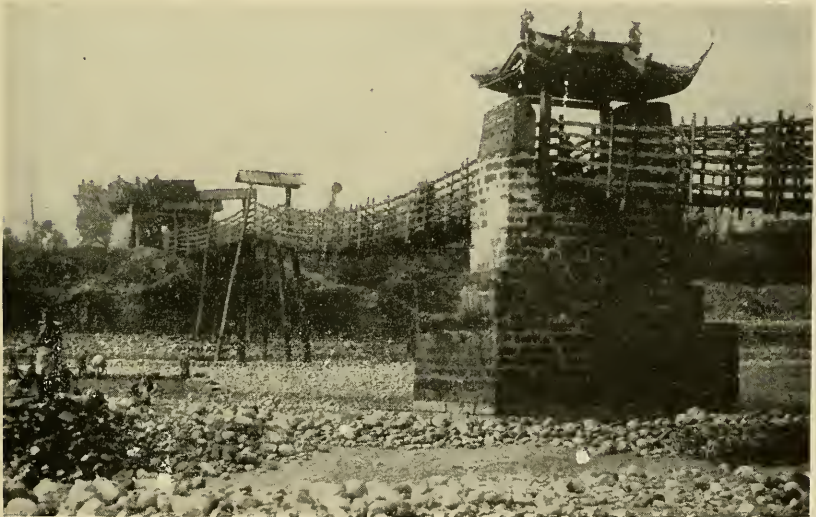
Armies are recorded as numbering from 3,000 to 5,000 men, and the main reliance in fighting was on the chariot, drawn, just as in the ancient Near East, by two horses yoked—not harnessed—abreast. Slaves and captives were employed as foot soldiers, as were also probably levies of peasants. Weapons used by the charioteers were, as far as we know, bronze battleaxes and spears and the composite bow—the latter a weapon of circumpolar distribution. How the foot soldiers were armed, we do not know.

Hunting.—Hunting played an important role during Shang times. Many products of the chase were utilized, as for example ivory, hides, horns, and plumes. Great organized battues were periodically held by the kings, riding in chariots just as in the ancient Near East. Their motive seems to have been not so much that of mere sport as the duty of ridding the land of dangerous and troublesome wild animals and of procuring victims for the sacrifices.

Among the creatures whose bones have been found in Shang deposits are the elephant, the tiger, the bear, the wild boar, deer, hares, and, strangely enough, the whale. Shang inscriptions sometimes state that elephants have been captured alive, not killed; and there is no doubt that the Shangs sometimes tamed these great animals.



1. CHINESE WATER WHEELS MADE OF BAMBOO



2. CHINESE SUSPENSION BRIDGE WITH BAMBOO CABLES



1. JUNKS UNDER SAIL, HANGCHOW BAY, NEAR NINGPO



2. SCENE ON UPPER YANGTZE RIVER

Writing.—There is no indication of even the beginnings of writing during Chinese Neolithic times, although perhaps quipus (knotted cords) or notched sticks may have been used then to aid the memory, just as by unlettered people in so many lands.

The earliest known Chinese writing, already mentioned as occurring in surviving Shang inscriptions, dates from around the latter half of the second millennium B.C. Even then, however, it was already highly developed, and must have had a long previous period of evolution somewhere. It is moreover directly ancestral to the Chinese writing of the present day. (Creel, 1937, pp. 1-16.)

Existing specimens of these inscriptions, aside from very brief ones on bronze vessels, are incised or scratched on animal bones and shells of the tortoise. Shoulder blades of oxen were often used. The inscriptions that we possess consist largely of oracular inquiries and responses; but it is known that the Shangs also wrote on wooden tablets and bamboo slips. Hence it is quite possible that a considerable body of literature may have existed; but if so, it has entirely perished.

Inscriptions on bone and shell were incised with a sharp point, perhaps of bronze or obsidian, for steel was not yet known, and the Shangs probably had nothing else hard enough. Some kind of brush was also used. A few characters thus written on potsherds have been found, and it is almost certain that writing on bamboo and wood was done with a brush.

Knowledge of writing during the Shang Dynasty was confined to a very small class, and the art itself was regarded as having a magical and mysterious character. Thus recorders were also diviners. The same way of thinking has survived in China down to much later times.

Religion.—We know something of the Shang pantheon—in part from contemporary inscriptions. The supreme god was Shang Ti. The title "Ti" indicated a divine being, and was applied by the Shangs not only to their highest divinity but also to the spirits of deceased royal ancestors. Hence it has been surmised that Shang Ti may have originated merely as the (legendary) first ancestor of the Shang kingly line.

Shang Ti was entreated both for abundant harvests and for success in war. He was believed to live in the sky, perhaps in the North Star, and so was in this sense a sky god; although we have no evidence that the Shangs worshiped the sky itself.

The Shangs also revered many other divinities, often female. Among them, according to the inscriptions, were the Eastern Mother, the Western Mother, the Dragon Woman, gods of the Winds, of Rivers, of Earth, and one called the Ruler of the (Four?) Quarters. This frequency of female

divinities is in marked contrast to the later Chinese Bronze Age, and may have been due to aboriginal influence. For goddesses play a great part in the primitive beliefs of eastern Asia, the Japanese Sun Goddess being probably the best-known example.

Of ancestor worship among the Shangs, the only direct evidence applies to the royal line alone; but there is little doubt that the ruling class in general practiced it throughout the original Chinese culture area.

The welfare of the spirits of the dead depended, it was held, on the sacrifices offered to them by their living descendants. It was regarded as highly dangerous, therefore, to withhold them and thus rouse the ancestral spirits to anger. These sacrifices consisted of both human and animal victims (Creel, 1936, pp. 206-216). The former were often "barbarian" (i. e., non-Chinese) captives of war, taken most frequently from the Chiangs, a people to the northwest. The Shangs appear in fact to have been in the habit of raiding the Chiangs for supplies of human victims in a way that recalls similar practices among the Aztecs of ancient Mexico.

Lastly, we may note, the Shangs had a "week" of 10 days, used in connection with their religious observances.

Disposal of the dead.—During Shang times, important people were buried in great rectangular or cruciform pits, together with much wealth and many human victims. Mounds were not, however, erected over such tombs as yet.

Fall of the Shangs.—A later tradition asserts that the Shang Dynasty came to an end during a period of protracted drought for which the reigning king was held responsible through his neglect to observe the proper rites. And quite apart from such superstitious ways of thinking, such a long interval of dryness must necessarily have led to much suffering, unrest, and discontent. There is also some evidence that the king himself added to this feeling by a determined effort to assert his power over some of the rebellious rulers of the subject city-states that composed the Shang "empire." And, worse still, in this attempt the king appears to have enlisted the aid of certain aboriginal tribes.

The rulers of these city-states were constantly trying to throw off the sway of their titular suzerain; and now some of them sought the aid of a group called the Chous, who lived on the northwestern frontiers of China, along the border between what are now the provinces of Shensi and Kansu (see map, fig. 21).

These Chou people had been in contact with the Shangs for several generations at least. When we first hear of them they seem to have been in process of exchanging a pastoral for an agricultural mode of life. In some ways they appear to have been less civilized than the Shangs, but to

have had a better organization for war and more effective leadership. In certain particulars their civilization appears to have had a closer resemblance to those of the ancient Near East than to that of the Shangs. Examples of this are: the use of a 7-day week instead of the one of 10 days employed by the Shangs; possession, by the Chou rulers at least, of regular harems, with eunuch attendants, apparently unknown among the Shangs; and succession in the kingly line from father to son. Lastly, the bronze sword (Janse, 1930a, pp. 67-134; Karlbeck, 1925, pp. 127-133), long known in the Occident (where in fact it was already being replaced by much more effective swords of iron), reached China either with the Chous or early in their period.

The overthrow of the Shangs is not known to us through contemporary accounts; but it seems pretty surely to have been the result of a concerted attack on them by some of their subject city-states together with the Chous. The latter are said to have had with them as subject-allies eight peoples occupying parts of western and northwestern China, mainly in the central and upper Yangtze basin. (Bishop, 1932c, pp. 236 et seq.)

The Shangs collapsed perhaps as much from lack of unity and cohesion among the various and heterogeneous elements under their rule as from external force. Their conquest by the Chous did not however take place as the result of a single battle, as the "orthodox" account states. On the contrary, it required a long time, and was not completed for half a century at least after the initial invasion by the Chous.

Perhaps the Shangs were too strong to be wholly crushed by the newcomers; for they were allowed to retain the nuclear part (called Sung) of their former territory, as vassals of the Chous. The princes of this remnant of the old Shang kingdom, said to have belonged to the Shang royal line, were granted the title of *kung* (duke), which no other feudal prince was permitted to hold.

The historical Chinese civilization that we know had its roots firmly implanted in the Bronze Age culture of the Shang period, and there has been no serious break with the past until recent and even modern times. In this sense, and in this sense only, may we speak of the Chinese as "unchanging."

THE CHOU DYNASTY

There are certain slight indications that during the Shang period and possibly even earlier, members of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic stock from the region north of the Tibetan plateau (see map, fig. 1) were pushing eastward and southward. With this movement of peoples the Chou invasion seems to have been connected, if indeed it was not actually part of it.

These migrations perhaps account for the appearance of Tibeto-Burman peoples in so much of western China, especially in the upper Yangtze basin. Be that as it may, at all events there was established there, somewhere around a thousand years before our era, a Bronze Age civilization in large part associated with them. In extreme western China the local culture also contained elements from northern India. Similarly, culture traits, passing through the region traversed by the now famous Burma Road, have gone on diffusing themselves from prehistoric times right down to the present day. To take a fairly recent example of this, maize or Indian corn, an American plant brought by the Portuguese to India during the sixteenth century, lost little time reaching China by this route. And the vital importance of the Burma Road to China today is well known to all.

Chou origin legends.—At the time when the Chous first come within the purview of history they were, we are told, being pushed steadily eastward. Legend also states that they even for a time became guardians of the western frontier for the Shang kings. That the latter ever conquered the Chous, we have no evidence; but they evidently attracted them strongly into their cultural orbit.

This outward thrust of the Chous from inner Asia in the direction of the coast lands was, it would seem, comparable to contemporary movements outward from the steppe regions into western Europe, southwestern Asia, and Egypt. (Latourette, 1934, vol. 1, pp. 42-44; Creel, 1936, pp. 227-229.)

The chief deity of the Chous, now as later, was a sky god, T'ien, believed to control the weather and whom the Chou royal line claimed as its ancestor. For it was from Hou Chi, "Prince Millet," said to have been miraculously sprung from T'ien and who became God of Agriculture under the Chous, that the latter claimed descent. In historical times, indeed, we find the Chou kings arrogating to themselves sole conduct of the worship of T'ien, and also the title of T'ien-tzŭ (Son of Heaven). This appellation remained the common one for the Chinese supreme rulers—the individuals whom we term "emperors"—down to 1911.

The Chous conquer northern China.—The Chous seem long to have meditated conquest of the Shang kingdom, against which they are said to have made at least one ineffectual attempt before they embarked on their final venture.⁶ They and their allies are said to have defeated the

⁶ The traditional date of 1122 B.C. for the Chou conquest is almost certainly too early by about three-quarters of a century. On this point, see Bishop, 1932c, pp. 235-237.

Shangs in the region of the Shang capital, which recent archeological excavation shows they then savagely sacked and destroyed.

The Chous then conquered much of northern China, where they established their power far more firmly than the Shangs had ever done. (On the Shang and Chou culture areas, see map, fig. 6.) The task seems to have required something like half a century, and a passage in Mencius tells us that they subdued 50 states. Over these they then set up a feudal kingdom of primitive type but still forming a great step in advance over



FIG. 6.—Shang (in black) and Chou (cross-hatched) culture areas, showing southward extension of latter.

anything in the way of a political organization that the Shangs had undertaken.

However, the Chous failed to subdue the aboriginal populations of the northern coast lands, and these long remained independent or at most became tribute payers. Their thorough assimilation into the Chinese political body was not accomplished until many centuries later.

The Chou conquest of northern China marked an important epoch in the history of civilization in the Far East, for as a result of it, many Shang refugees seem to have carried their own higher culture to various outlying regions hitherto barbarous. Such a process has, in fact, always been one

of the ways in which cultural advances have taken place in the Far East just as everywhere else. Further, the Chou period was the one in which the Chinese people gradually developed a consciousness of cultural unity.

Nature of the Chou kingdom.—The earlier Chou kings, in organizing their feudal kingdom, are said to have divided it for administrative purposes into 9 (sometimes given as 12) *chou* or circuits. Over these they placed superintendents (significantly called *mu*, bullock drivers) to collect tribute.

Politically, the kingdom is said to have contained at first 1,800 fiefs, many of them grouped into large territorial units granted to the conquering Chou king's relatives and allies. The old city-states did not, however, entirely disappear; in certain instances, indeed, they retained their identity for long periods.

By the eighth century B.C. the Yellow River basin (essentially the Chou kingdom, though the latter seems to have embraced extensions outside of it, particularly on the south; see fig. 6), had about 100 fiefs; but in time even this number was still further reduced. Finally, toward the end of the dynasty only 7 large states were left.

For some three centuries after their conquest of the Shangs, the Chou kings remained in their old seats in the west. They were at first rulers of the war-leader type; but they also took over the sacerdotal functions of their predecessors the Shang kings. As high priests of the kingdom, their persons were sacred, and they were the fountainheads of all legitimate authority. Their royal symbol was the battleax.

The early Chou kings pushed their conquests (at least temporarily) into the Yangtze basin, and perhaps also toward the northwest. But at length their power dwindled. In the eighth century B.C. the Chou line was driven eastward by renewed attacks from the west, and established itself in northern Honan (see map, fig. 21). It thus lost the territorial basis of its power, and its scions gradually sank to the position of mere political figureheads. But for several centuries longer they retained their priestly functions and remained the sources of legitimacy.

Social organization.—Society was divided during most of the Chou period (we know little of its earlier portion) into two classes, a small one of nobles, who held all the land and offices, and a large one of commoners—peasant-serfs, artisans, traders, and slaves—who performed the labor.

The nobles were grouped in 30 or fewer ancestor-worshipping clans. In the "Spring and Autumn Annals," for example, 124 feudal states are mentioned but only 22 clans. Branches of the latter were located in various parts of the country, often widely separated from one another.



1. TRAVEL BY LAND
Loess deposits in distance.



2. TRAVEL BY WATER
The Yangtze Gorges.



1. PILE VILLAGE NEAR YANGTZE RIVER



2. COUNTRY VILLAGE, NORTHWESTERN CHINA



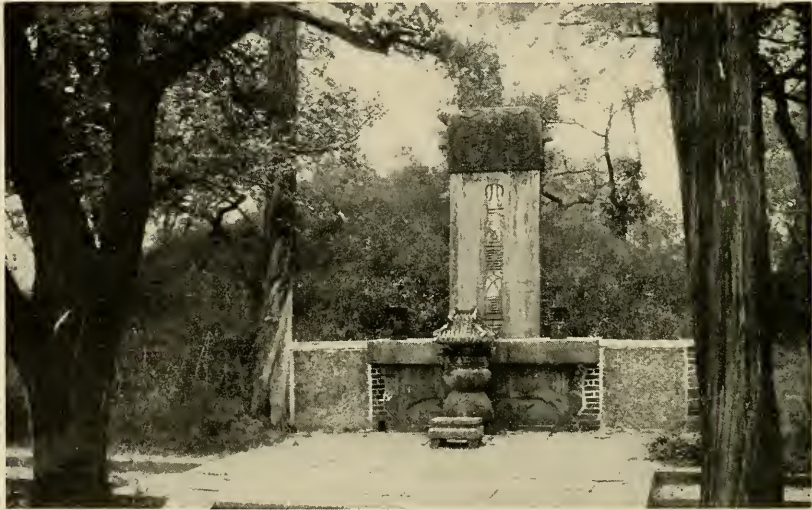
1. TEMPLE OF HEAVEN. PEKING



2. SUMMER PALACE, NEAR PEKING



1. TEMPLE AT SACRED SPRING, NORTHWESTERN CHINA



2. TOMB OF CONFUCIUS, JUST NORTH OF HIS BIRTHPLACE

The head of each clan was trustee for its land (which was thus not his own personal property, to do with as he liked); and he also conducted the clan worship. The head of the ruling clan of a state worshiped his own ancestors and also the patron divinities of his state. For no separate priestly class existed in ancient China.

Nobles were subject only to their own code, not to the laws governing the lower classes. Knowledge of these laws gave the nobles a great advantage, and they objected strongly to their being reduced to writing. They also practiced polygamy, though custom strictly forbade their taking wives or even concubines of the same clan as their own, no matter how remote the kinship might be in reality. Headship of the clan passed in the male line, usually to the eldest son of the principal wife; though in this respect usage was not fixed. The latter fact often caused great trouble, through disputed inheritances. Noblewomen could not hold land or succeed to headship either of a clan or of a state. Hence inheritance of these privileges in the female line was impossible.

Of the plebeian class, on the other hand, we know little; for early Chinese writers did not concern themselves with the masses. We may say however that the vast bulk of the population consisted of peasants in a state of serfdom, practically at the mercy of their lords. These peasant-serfs may have been grouped in matrilineal clans; and they probably retained much—as indeed Chinese peasants still do—of the old Neolithic culture of their remote forebears. They seem to have lived in rural hamlets, and to have had little contact with the urban life of the nobility. These little peasant hamlets were organized communally, and their inhabitants did their field work in common. Stone, shell, and wood continued to be used for agricultural implements. The ox-drawn plow was not yet known in China, its place being taken by foot plows used by men working in pairs.

Serfs were bound to the estates on which they were born, and efforts were made by their lords to keep them from shifting their villages about in old Neolithic fashion; for it was the labor of the peasants that gave value to the land, and there was a great demand for workers. It was therefore a crime to entice them away, and runaways could be reclaimed. There are indications, too, that the feudal lords dreaded uprisings among their peasants, and it was a capital offense to arouse discontent or unrest among them.

The peasants tilled the land, but did not own it, although plots of ground on which to grow food for themselves and their families were periodically assigned to them, on which, however, they had to pay tithes.

They had also to perform other work, such as ditching and draining; and they had likewise to follow their lords in the frequent wars, both public and private.

The serfs on an estate were supervised by a land steward or bailiff appointed by the lord, and who among other duties exercised control over peasant marriages.

At the bottom of the social scale, in Chou times as later, was a not very large class of slaves, recruited partly from criminals and captives of war. These were not attached to the soil, like the serfs, but were bought and sold in the market place with domestic animals.

Economic development.—During much of the Chou period trade was by barter, and taxes and tribute were levied in kind. Cowry shells were, however, highly prized, both for their scarcity value and because of their religious and magical associations (which seem to have existed in many other lands also). The only basis of wealth, however, was land—arable, pasture, forests, salt marshes, and mines—which could only be held, whether in absolute ownership or as fiefs, by clans of nobles. Plebeians were thus barred from obtaining wealth and consequent power.

Later, however, there occurred a gradual but great economic evolution. No coined money yet existed; but there came to be used in its place as units of exchange rolls of silk and fixed quantities of grain. We have no evidence that oxen or sheep were ever so used in ancient China, as they were in the west.

Trade and transportation.—Trade, both domestic and foreign (i. e., mainly with the Yangtze Valley, not then regarded as a part of China) was active, and was partly in the form of state enterprises and partly in the hands of traders, who had however to pay heavy imposts.

No understanding of the true function of trade, as a form of wealth production, seems ever to have arisen in ancient China, where the nobles despised it and regarded traders with contempt. Hence commerce was tolerated merely, not actively encouraged. There are some indications however that it was more highly esteemed in the great Yangtze Valley states, and that they knew better how to make it contribute to building up their strength than did those of the more purely Chinese north.

This earlier dependence on a natural economy and especially on taxes levied in grain rendered transportation of revenue from distant districts to the royal capital a difficult matter, and added greatly to the decentralization characteristic of the time.

But around the middle of the Chou period the idea arose of casting—not striking—metallic token money, or in other words a coinage. This practice seems to have originated in northeastern China. At first it took

the form of miniature models of domestic utensils—knives, spades, and hoes—cast in copper (see fig. 7). This innovation fundamentally altered the basis of wealth, and for the first time permitted its accumulation in a form other than that of land. It thus deprived the nobles of that monopoly of the power and prestige that accompany riches, and played an important—perhaps even the decisive—part in undermining the old feudal system and causing its disintegration and ultimate downfall.

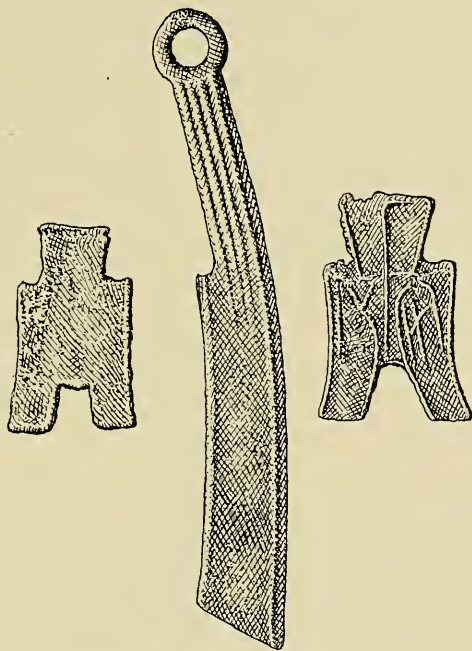


FIG. 7.—Ancient Chinese token money of copper.

This process became accelerated toward the end of the Chou period, and was of course accompanied by the disappearance of many of the barriers that had formerly separated different classes of society. Traces of these however still survive in both the Confucian and the Taoist beliefs and practices, as we shall see in a moment.

Arts and crafts.—What has already been said in regard to the arts and crafts of Shang times will apply, in most cases with increased force, to those which flourished under the Chous.

While few actual remains of the technical skill and esthetic talent of the Chous have come down to us aside from their work in bronze casting and carving in jade (for examples of their work in bronze, see pl. 10,

and figs. 8, 9, and 10), we know that their work ranked very high indeed. The subject is, however, too vast a one to receive detailed treatment here. Fortunately there is no lack of excellent and authoritative books on various aspects of this fascinating subject, and to these the student may turn for further information.

Habitations.—The Chou nobles and their dependents lived in towns protected by rectangular ramparts of pounded earth provided with gates flanked by wooden towers (see fig. 11). In the center stood the palace enclosure of the local feudal lord (or in the capital of a state, that of its

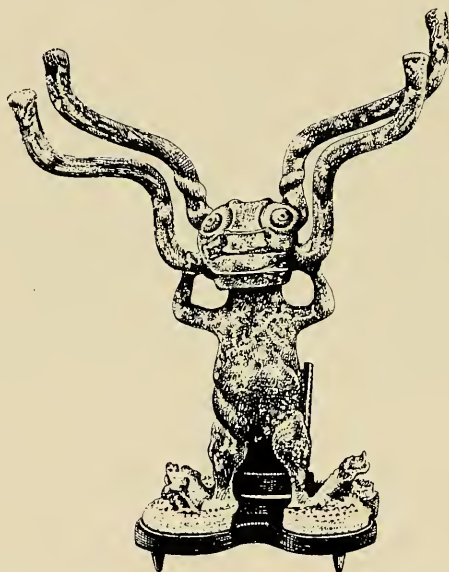


FIG. 8.—Chou Dynasty monster figure of bronze.

ruler), including his ancestral temple and the "altar" (a mere mound of earth) of the Shê or God of the Soil of the region. Every town had just north of it a market place, from which the lord drew additional revenue through a sales tax. (For a plan of the ruins of such a town, of the Chou period, see fig. 12.)

The palace enclosure also contained a school for the sons of nobles, the subjects taught being the rites (i. e., correct procedure on all occasions, religious as well as secular), music, archery, chariot driving, reckoning, and writing. Reverence to superiors or divinities was shown by bowing, kneeling, or prostration, as in the Occident, not by squatting as among the peasants and the peoples of southeastern Asia and the islands off the coast.

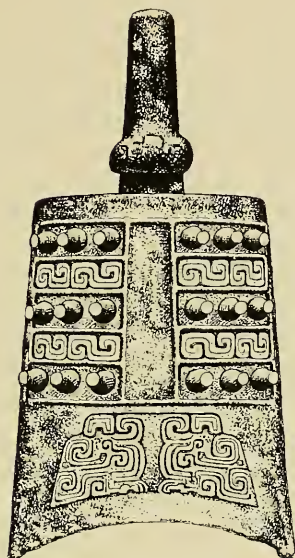


FIG. 9.—Ancient Chinese bronze bell, Chou period.

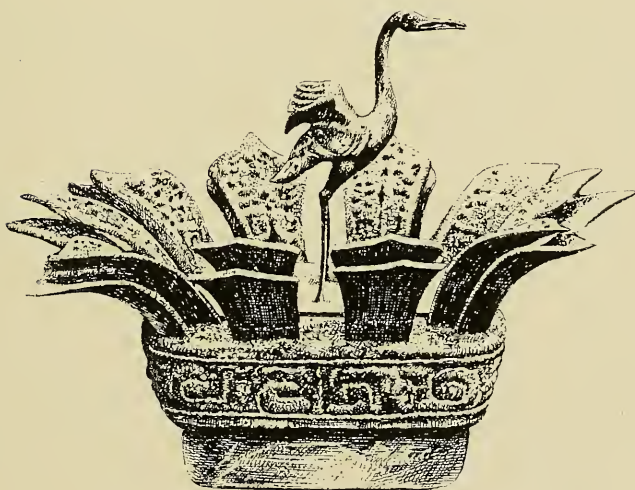


FIG. 10.—Lid of Chou Dynasty bronze vase with bird figures.

Houses were of timber, pillared (see pl. 12, fig. 2), carved, and painted (or lacquered), red being a favorite color, regarded as lucky. On the plastered walls were executed paintings of various auspicious creatures, such as the tiger and dragon. Pleasure towers, summer houses, and gardens are also mentioned. The upturned roof corners, regarded in the Occident as so typically Chinese, did not appear in China until long after the beginning of the Christian Era; during Chou times Chinese roofs had straight lines, as in the west.

Costume.—Costume, of course, varied according to rank, social position, and wealth, and probably, too, from state to state. That of the nobles was in general of silk, and was long and flowing, as in the Near East. Furs

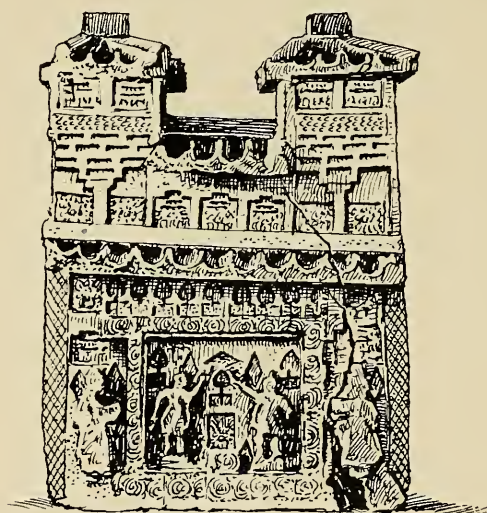
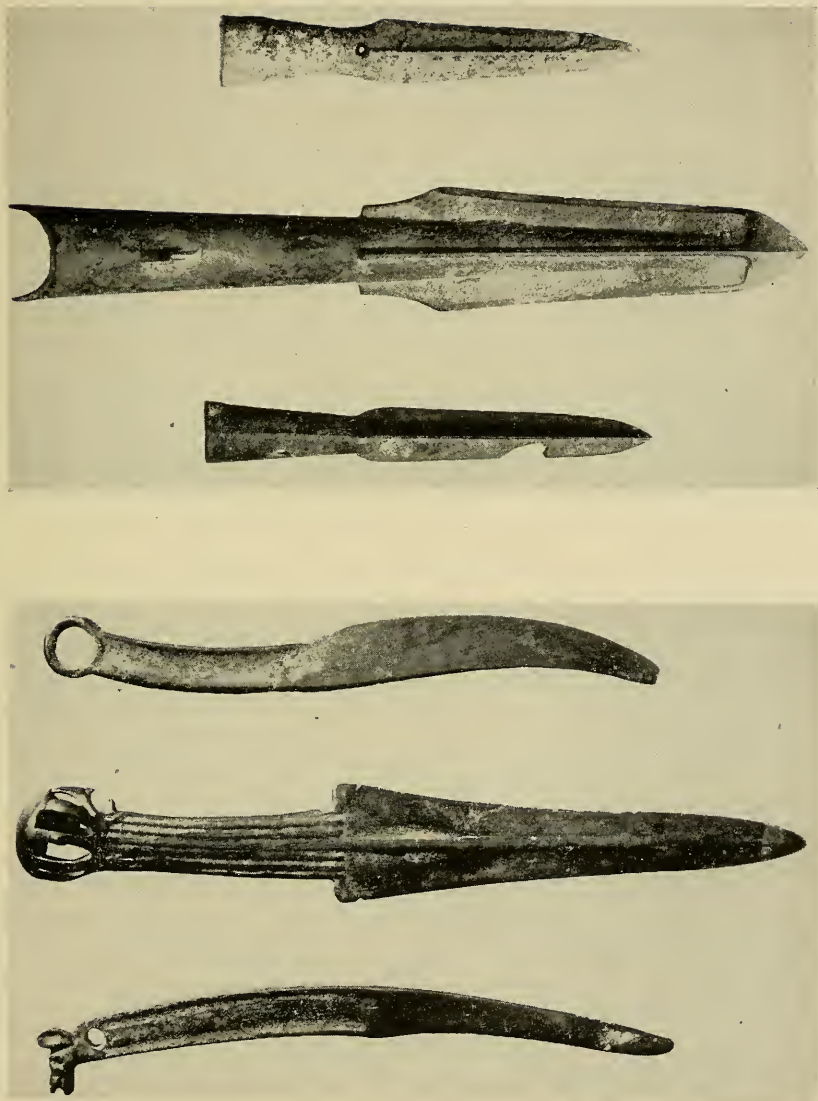


FIG. 11.—Tile model of ancient Chinese city gate.

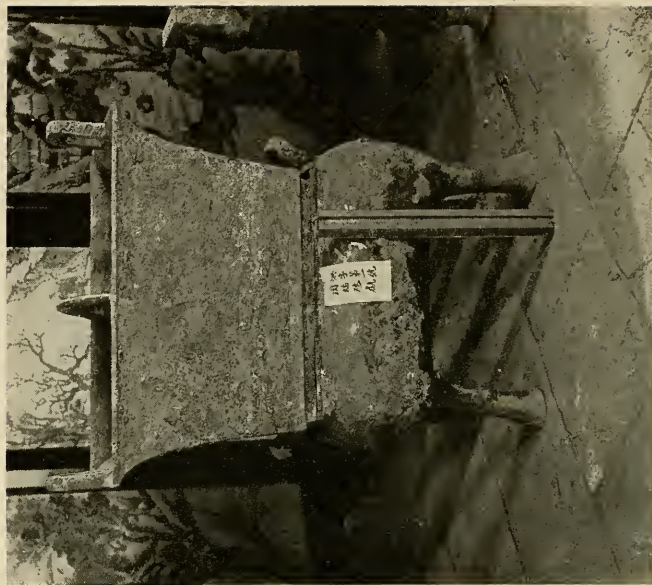
and feather capes were worn, particularly in cold weather. Embroidery and fine needlework were highly regarded, and bright colors esteemed. Shoes, at least among the well-to-do, were often ornamented with jade.

Manners and customs.—The rank of a noble was indicated especially by his headgear. This, on attainment of his majority by a patrician youth, was conferred on him with much ceremony in his ancestral temple. The token of a young noblewoman's reaching marriageable age was the assumption of a hairpin, similarly bestowed.

Shoes were removed on entering a house; and bathing seems to have been customary, at least among the nobles. Chairs and tables had not yet been introduced; hence people sat cross-legged on the floor or knelt on mats or cushions, and food was served on low stands.



ANCIENT CHINESE LANCE POINTS AND KNIVES OF BRONZE



CHINESE BRONZE VESSELS FOR CEREMONIAL USE, MIDDLE OF FIRST MILLENNIUM B. C.

Food and drink.—Generally speaking, the basis of diet among all classes, nobles and commoners alike, was one of cereals—millet, wheat, and rice. Nobles, however, in contradistinction to the peasantry, were also great eaters of meat, especially beef, mutton, and game, and of fish. And, just as today, there was a great variety of sauces.

Dishes were of earthenware, wood, and bamboo. Glazed pottery disappeared with the fall of the Shangs, and true porcelain was still far in the future. Chopsticks were a late invention, and whether they had yet

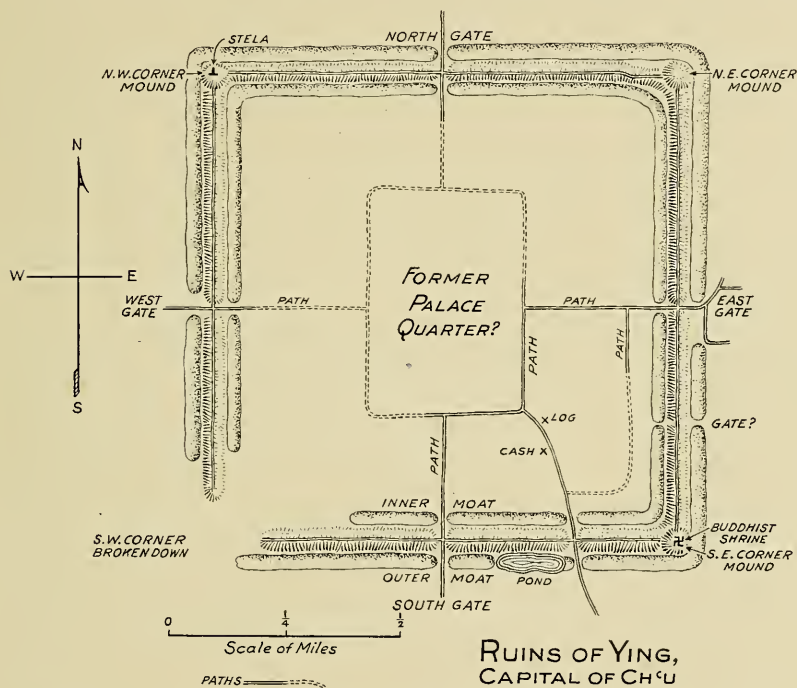


FIG. 12.—Ruins of Ying, ancient capital of Ch'u, on the Yangtze River.

appeared during the Chou period we do not know; they are mentioned even as far back as late Shang times, but this may be an anachronism.

The diet of the peasants was mainly millet, just as it is today in northern China. Their flesh food was chiefly dog, pig, and fowl—the latter apparently more highly esteemed than duck.

All classes were given to drinking, usually done in connection with some religious or other ceremonial occasion; and beverages were various kinds of beer, brewed from millet or rice. The ancient Chinese, like the peoples of the west, early learned, empirically, that water was unsafe to drink on account of risk from typhoid; and tea was as yet unknown. As

among many peoples, including ourselves not so many centuries ago, drinking vessels were often horns; those of the wild ox were especially prized by the ancient Chinese, perhaps on account of their capacity.

Law.—As we have already remarked, the nobles had their own codes of conduct; and they were, moreover, until long after the beginning of the full historical period, sole repositories of the regulations governing their peasants. These were committed to memory, not put in writing, and this of course gave the nobles a great advantage. Hence the latter vigorously opposed the issuance of written codes, which in fact did not appear in the various states until around the middle of the first millennium B.C. In the Near East advanced codes of laws had appeared 2,000 years earlier.

Witchcraft was much feared, by high as well as low, and penalties against it were severe. In general, execution of the laws was harsh, and included such punishments as boiling alive, tearing asunder, decapitation, and mutilation of various kinds. In addition to the regulations imposed on them by their lords, the peasantry also observed the ancient local customs of each region; but just what these were, we have only incidental knowledge.

Warfare.—The Chou period, like that of Bronze Age civilizations everywhere, was one of constant war. With the weakening of the royal power, especially after the Chou kings were driven eastward just after 770 B.C., the more powerful feudal states began a process of absorption of their weaker neighbors and of the neighboring non-Chinese peoples which led finally to only seven great kingdoms being left.

In theory, wars were undertaken to punish and coerce those, whether Chinese or "barbarian," who refused to acknowledge obedience to the Son of Heaven; but in reality they were waged for purposes of aggrandizement. The third quarter roughly of the first millennium B.C. came, in fact, to be known as the Age of the Contending States. (Latourette, 1934, vol. 1, pp. 251-256.)

The feudal lords also carried on private wars with their neighbors, even of the same state. Rulers, however, constantly tried to put down this practice, productive as it was of so much disorder and misery.

There has been at no time in Chinese history a special military class, comparable, for instance, with the Japanese *samurai*. All Chinese nobles, however, were supposed to be warriors. The title of a minister of war, Ssü-ma, meant Master of the Horse, and reflected the great importance of the horse in war.

Armies were composed of two main classes of troops, chariotry and foot. The former, composed of nobles, was called *shih*, while the latter, a rabble of levies of peasant-serfs, was called *lū*. Hence an armed force

as a whole was known as a *shih-lü*. In theory each feudal lord's chariot was accompanied by from 75 to 100 of his peasants, on foot, but in reality the proportion of foot soldiers attached to each chariot rarely exceeded 50. Cavalry did not form an element in Chinese armies until near the close of the Chou period, and chariots continued to be the main arm until about the third century B.C., after which they ceased to be mentioned as being employed in war. (For ancient Chinese Bronze Age bits, see fig. 13.)

Chinese armies in Chou times were divided into an advance guard, a center, right and left wings, and a rear guard. Provisions were carried in oxcarts and on pack oxen, and consisted largely of dried flesh (often that of wild game) and of grain. Armies then, however, just as elsewhere, eked out their supplies by foraging and pillage. The enormous numbers sometimes attributed to ancient Chinese armies by old writers are evident exaggerations; for it would have been, as a simple calcula-

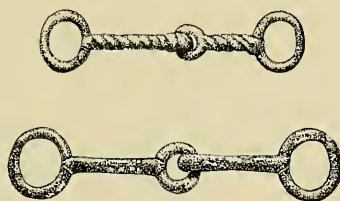


FIG. 13.—Ancient Chinese snaffle bits of bronze.

tion will show, impossible to maintain them in the field under the conditions of transport that then prevailed.

Methods of combat.—Each chariot carried three men clad in hide armor—a driver, an archer, and a spearman. How the infantry were armed there are no clear indications, although they seem not as a rule to have carried missile weapons such as bows and arrows or slings. Chariots (see pl. 3, fig. 2 for what seems to have been an antler cheekpiece of a Chinese Bronze Age bit) did not generally fight in massed formation but singly, each accompanied by its supporting contingent of foot. Every noble bore his own standard, by which he might be recognized in battle; and nobles as a class deemed it derogatory to fight on foot, "like peasants." There are indications, however, that the practice was growing more usual toward the end of the Chou period.

Armies were accompanied on campaigns by special sacred chariots bearing the tablets (perhaps originally images) of the Shê or God of the Soil of the state and also of the chief ancestor of its ruler; these tablets were supposed to extend their aid in battle, much like the Ark of the Covenant among the ancient Israelites. Omens were taken before an action; and

the signal for advance was given on a drum, that for retreat on a gong, both instruments borne on the chariot of the leader. Cessation of these sounds was apt to cause a panic among the troops by giving the impression that the leader had been either slain or made a prisoner by the enemy. Trumpets were not used in war.

Principles of strategy were well understood and applied, but tactics were undeveloped. According to our evidence, battles were confused affairs, with no attempt at maneuvering. Various simple stratagems were, however, employed, especially feigned flights, meant to throw the foe off his guard. Attacks were usually directed against the weakest part of the hostile line, and particular efforts were made to kill or capture the enemy commander or seize his standard.

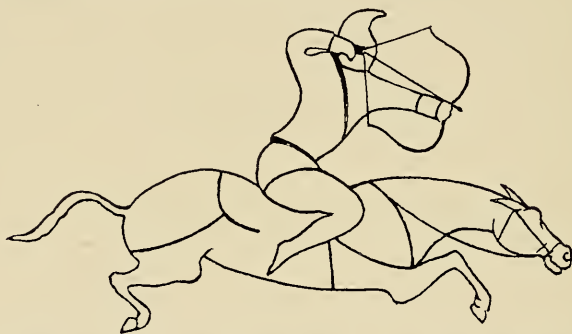


FIG. 14.—Chinese mounted archer, from design on tile; late first millennium B. C.

In the Occident, mounted troops and iron weapons began to appear toward the end of the second millennium B.C., but in China not until around 500 years or so later. The idea of riding almost certainly came to the latter country, as it may already have done in the west also, as a culture loan from the nomad peoples of the steppe belt of inner Asia. For example, there are indications that the western "barbarians," who around 770 B.C. expelled the Chous from their old seats in Shensi and drove them eastward, were already in possession of mounted troops.

The earliest Chinese cavalry seem to have been light lancers riding bareback and employed for scouting, skirmishing, and foraging, not in battle. Around 300 B.C., however, the northwestern Chinese states adopted the use of horse archers from their steppe neighbors (see fig. 14). Such troops were far more formidable than chariotry, on account of their mobility and speed, and soon supplanted the use of chariots in war. They thus contributed to the downfall of the already crumbling feudal system by depriving the Chinese nobles, preeminently charioteers, of much of their prestige in war.

In the Yangtze basin and along the southern Chinese coasts, wars were often waged in fleets of large dugout canoes, ancestors of the later dragon boats (see fig. 15); for in that region chariotry seems to have been unknown until introduced by Chinese refugees from the north, while the great rivers provided abundance of waterways.

Armor and weapons.—The nobles, fighting, as has already been said, from chariots, wore hide armor, with helmets of leather or copper (perhaps of bronze). Shields, of leather, wood, or wicker, were also used. (Laufer, 1914, *passim*.) The infantry too may have carried shields; but in other respects their costume in war was probably simply what they wore in peace. Of their weapons we know almost nothing, though in some instances they seem to have borne dagger-axes (see fig. 16).



FIG. 15.—Modern dragon boat, Yangtze River; from a photograph.

Missile weapons were the bow and arrow and the sling. The former was of the compound type, of wood, horn, and sinew, and in time became the especially characteristic arm of the steppe nomads; the famous Turkish bow is probably the best-known example. Arrowpoints were of bronze, often with three edges. Crossbows were mainly used from chariots and in defending or attacking fortified places. That spears and javelins were ever hurled, there is nothing to indicate.

Hand weapons included different kinds of battle-axes, the dagger-ax especially being often mentioned; and there were different types of bronze spears (see pl. 10). The bronze sword, as already noted, appears late in China; and when it does so, it is in an undeveloped Altaic form, perhaps a culture loan from steppe regions (see fig. 17).

Standards were of silk, yaks' tails, and tufts of feathers. Forms of these have survived in parts of eastern Asia until very recently. In general, siegecraft was well understood, and cities were taken in various ways—by surprise attacks, storm, or building around them walls of cir-

cumvallation and starving them out. Or their ramparts, of rammed earth, might be breached by diverting rivers against them, or by tunneling under them and then setting on fire the timber props supporting the roof of the mine and thus causing its collapse. The latter method was also employed in the Occident, where it seems to have appeared rather earlier.

Blood feuds.—In addition to waging private wars, already mentioned, the Chou Dynasty nobles, turbulent, aggressive, and given to fighting,

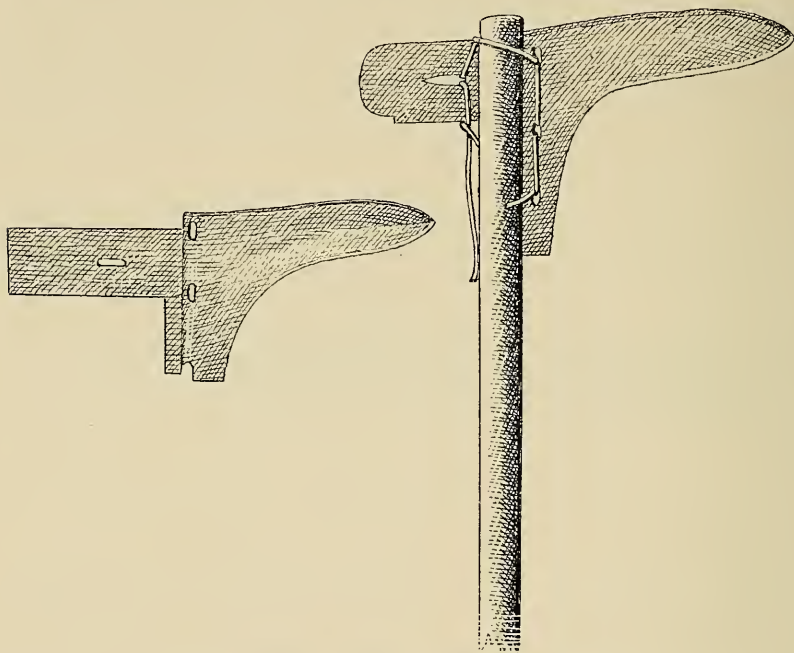


FIG. 16.—Ancient Chinese dagger-axes of bronze.

regarded the relentless prosecution of blood feuds as a sacred duty. This custom the rulers of states found it exceedingly hard to abolish, in spite of the disorders to which it gave rise.

Social effects of war.—This constant warfare naturally produced in time important social consequences. For example, as improved methods of fighting appeared, the exclusive place in war held by the Chou nobles could no longer be maintained, and social barriers were broken down. Various classes of plebeians were rewarded for courage or loyalty in war by being elevated to higher positions than any to which they might have aspired before. Thus peasants and members of the artisan class might be

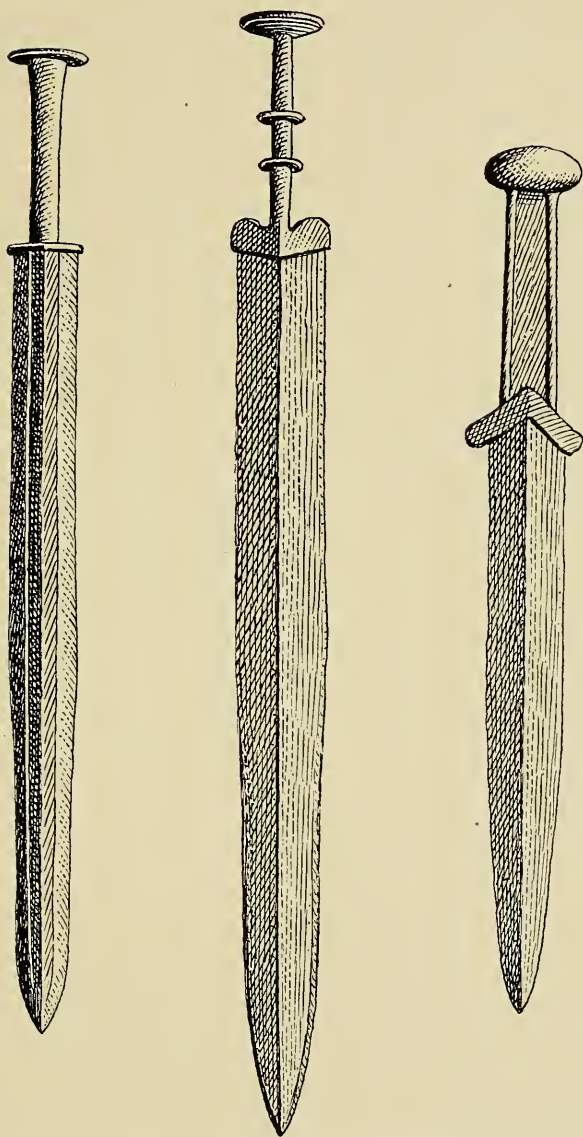


FIG. 17.—Chinese bronze swords.

ennobled (i. e., become landholders and hence feudal vassals). Slaves were similarly rewarded by being granted freedom.

Hunting.—Originally, as we have already noted of the Shang period, it was the duty of Chinese nobles to rid the land of dangerous or troublesome wild beasts; but in Chou times the sport motive seems to have predominated.

For this purpose the Chou kings and nobles held great seasonal hunts, conducted on a large scale. These were carried on in chariots, just as in the ancient Near East, with the aid of large armies of peasant beaters on foot. Such hunts served as training and preparation for war, and they also sometimes masked surprise attacks on unsuspecting states. Game laws were very strict, it being for instance as great a crime to kill a deer as to murder a man.

As the country grew more settled, however, and game scarcer, rulers and powerful nobles enclosed private hunting parks, just as did, for example, the ancient Persians. Prohibitions against killing game or even gathering wood in these parks were among the chief grievances of the peasantry, who regarded them as a great hardship.

Religion.—Peasant religion during the Chou period seems to have been derived from the old Neolithic fertility cults, and was marked by much witchcraft, magic, and even human sacrifice, though the latter practice was opposed by the lords, probably on economic rather than humanitarian grounds, and eventually disappeared.

Toward the close of the Chou period feudalism declined, its decay not unnaturally going hand in hand with a recrudescence of the old popular religion. At the same time, too, the masses seem to have adopted elements from the ancestor worship of the nobles. In this way gradually evolved the Chinese cult of ancestors of later and modern times.

Among the nobles, on the other hand, a quite different religion prevailed. In this, the chief god, T'ien, was regarded both as the ultimate ancestor of the royal line and also as a sky god.

Fairly early in the Chou period a tendency arose to identify T'ien with Shang Ti, chief god of the Shangs. This confusion was apparently facilitated by the fact that both divinities were sky gods, just as were the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter, also eventually identified.

The Chous also had a Goddess of Earth, Ti, a kind of consort of T'ien (Bishop, 1933c, pp. 29-31); thus the Confucian "Classics" tell us that "T'ien and Ti are the father and mother of all things living."⁷ In the

⁷ The notion of marriage between Sky and Earth is a very common and widespread one.

religion of the Chous, in marked contrast to that of the Shangs, goddesses seem to have played a very minor part. They are found more particularly among the coastal populations, not yet fully Chinese, and also among the insular and other peripheral peoples of eastern Asia.

The Chou pantheon, which we know only in late form, comprised, in addition to the gods brought with them by the Chou and including of course the royal ancestors, other divinities, some of them taken over from the Shangs and perhaps also from the aboriginal peoples of eastern Asia. Thus there were local gods (not goddesses) of the soil, the Shê, already mentioned (Bishop, 1933c, pp. 32-34); these we know existed at least as far back as Shang times, and theirs was a primitive concept with many archaic features. There was also a Rain God in the form of a frog.

The dragon was regarded, if not actually as a divinity, at least as a supernatural being, benevolent in nature—not, as in Europe, maleficent. The original form of this concept dates back at least to Shang times, and seems to have been founded in part on the Chinese alligator, regarded as a rain bringer, and therefore as a friend of man.

But the real basis of aristocratic religion under the Chous, as most probably under their predecessors the Shangs, was the cult of ancestors. Whether the Chous were ancestor worshipers before their conquest of the Shangs is unknown; but after that event the deceased forebears of their kings became the patron divinities of their kingdom. Hou Chi, "Prince Millet," was at once an ancestor of the Chou royal line and also its official God of Agriculture. (Bishop, 1933c, pp. 37 et seq.)

Souls of nobles after death became *shên*; those of plebeians, *kuei*. The latter term was also applied to the gods, demons, and ghosts of non-Chinese peoples.

There is little to indicate that divinities in Chou times were regarded as having human form, or even of their being represented by images. Rather, they seem to have been indicated by symbols. That of T'ien, for example, was a circle or disk; that of Earth, a square. This symbolism persisted, officially at least, down to very recent times.

In general, ancient Chinese divinities and supernatural beings were usually regarded as having grotesque and composite forms, and thus belong to a stage of religious thought corresponding roughly to that of the old Egyptian "beast gods," familiar to most of us. Thus Ho Po ("Count of the Ho"), God of the Huang Ho or Yellow River, had a human face and the body of a fish. Shên-nung, God of Agriculture in the Yangtze basin and who in northern China supplanted Hou Chi in the same capacity toward the close of Chou times, had a human body and the head of a bull. Beings with the bodies of birds and human faces or with the bodies

of serpents and human heads, as well as many others of similar composite form, also occur in the old writings.

Among the natural objects worshiped were mountains, rivers, springs (see pl. 9, fig. 1), rocks, and trees. Thus, "famous mountains and great rivers" are often mentioned as worshiped by the feudal princes. This was undoubtedly a very primitive survival; for such objects have been venerated in many countries from remote prehistoric times.

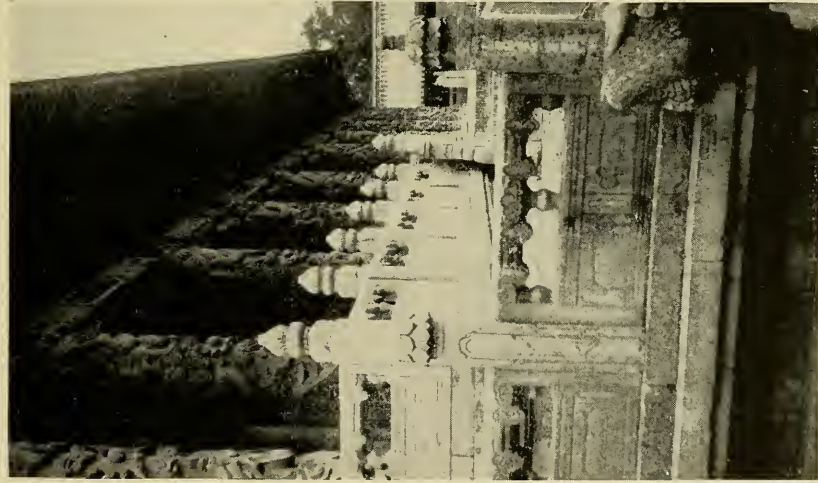
The sacrifices that accompanied worship in the Chou period were similar to those of the Shangs, but with certain progressive modifications. Among the victims offered were cattle, swine, sheep, and dogs. Horses were also sacrificed, especially to the Chou God of War. Human sacrifices, common in Shang times, were still occasionally offered by the Chous; but this practice became rarer as time went on, and at length disappeared almost entirely.

As in most lands at certain stages of religious development, the will of gods and ancestors was sought before embarking on any enterprise of importance. In the official religion this was most usually done with the aid of the shell of the tortoise; hence "to consult the tortoise" came to mean to inquire about the future. Omens were also drawn from various natural phenomena, such as dreams or the flight of birds. The howling of ghosts and the hooting of owls were portents of evil.

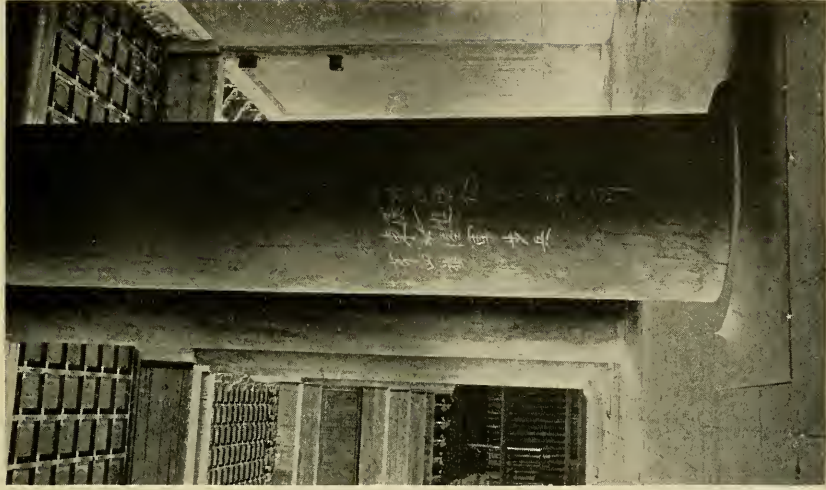
With the decline in power of the Chou royal line and the decay of the old aristocratic religion, popular concepts once more rose to the surface. During this period also the religious ideas of the northern Chinese were influenced and modified by others traceable to the Yangtze basin. Instances of this are the displacing by Shên-nung (the "Divine Husband-man") of Hou Chi as God of Agriculture in northern China, and the extension to the latter region of the dragon concept, pretty surely of southern origin.

We may note in this connection that many of the elements of the ancient Chinese religious beliefs and practices had a far wider range than China proper. Some of them point to western Asia and even to eastern Europe. In the main, however, they belong to that body of religious ideas and customs that pervaded southeastern Asia and certain adjacent island groups from times probably before the appearance of a Bronze Age civilization in northern China.

Examples of these latter traits are: the dragon-boat festival, especially characteristic of southern China but extending over a wide area outside China itself (Bishop, 1938b, pp. 415-424); the tug-of-war; ceremonial swinging; and the ritual bullfight (Bishop, 1925)—all of them practices apparently connected with the promotion of fertility.



1. TEMPLE OF CONFUCIUS, AT HIS
BIRTHPLACE



2. WOODEN COLUMNS, THE MING TOMBS
NEAR PEKING

Later Chinese religion was only in part an outgrowth of the beliefs that prevailed during Chou times. For the eventual disappearance of the feudal system with its aristocratic ancestor worship caused the destruction of the latter in its old form and its adoption, with certain important modifications, by the Chinese people in general. Traces of the old aristocratic religion may, however, be seen even today in the Confucian system (for the temple to Confucius at his birthplace see pl. 12, fig. 1); and many of the ancient beliefs of the masses, among them probably survivals from Neolithic times, still appear in modern Taoism.

For Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was himself a member of the Chou nobility (though claiming descent from Shang times), a loyal subject of his feudal prince and of the Chou king, and a faithful follower of the code of conduct of his own social class. (See pl. 9, fig. 2 for the tomb of Confucius.) During several centuries after his death, however, his teachings exerted little influence; and it was not until the founding of the Han Dynasty (ca. 200 B.C.) that the authorities, realizing the importance of Confucianism as an instrument of statecraft and a means of controlling the people, began to give it recognition and encouragement.

On the other hand, the ancient Chinese popular beliefs and practices tended more and more to associate themselves with the doctrines of Laotze (traditional date of birth 604 B.C.). That philosopher, of whose teachings the later Taoist system is in part the product, voiced the resentment of the masses against the arrogance, tyranny, and bloodshed of the feudal princes. His views were essentially democratic, and denied the value of petty human distinctions and ambitions. Hence the very ancient but long-submerged beliefs of the lower classes have naturally tended to crystallize about his teachings.

Later, during the early centuries of the Christian Era, Chinese religious ideas, together with other cultural features, spread over a large part of the Far East. Notably was this the case with Indo-China, Korea, and Japan. Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tibet—regions no farther away geographically but with different types of culture patterns—were less intimately affected.

Music.—Music played a part of great importance during the Chou period in all ceremonial life, on religious occasions as well as at banquets, archery contests, and the like. It had especially religious and magical connotations, and correct tunes were supposed to frighten away evil spirits and summon beneficent ones, including those of the ancestors when these were to receive worship. Musical instruments were drums and bronze bells (see fig. 9); flutes, single and double; whistles; and sets of musical stones. Simple stringed instruments seem also to have been used. (Creel, 1936, pp. 330 et seq.)

Disposal of the dead.—As we have already seen, disposal of the dead naturally played a part of the first importance among an ancestor-worshipping people like the ancient Chinese nobles, during all periods.

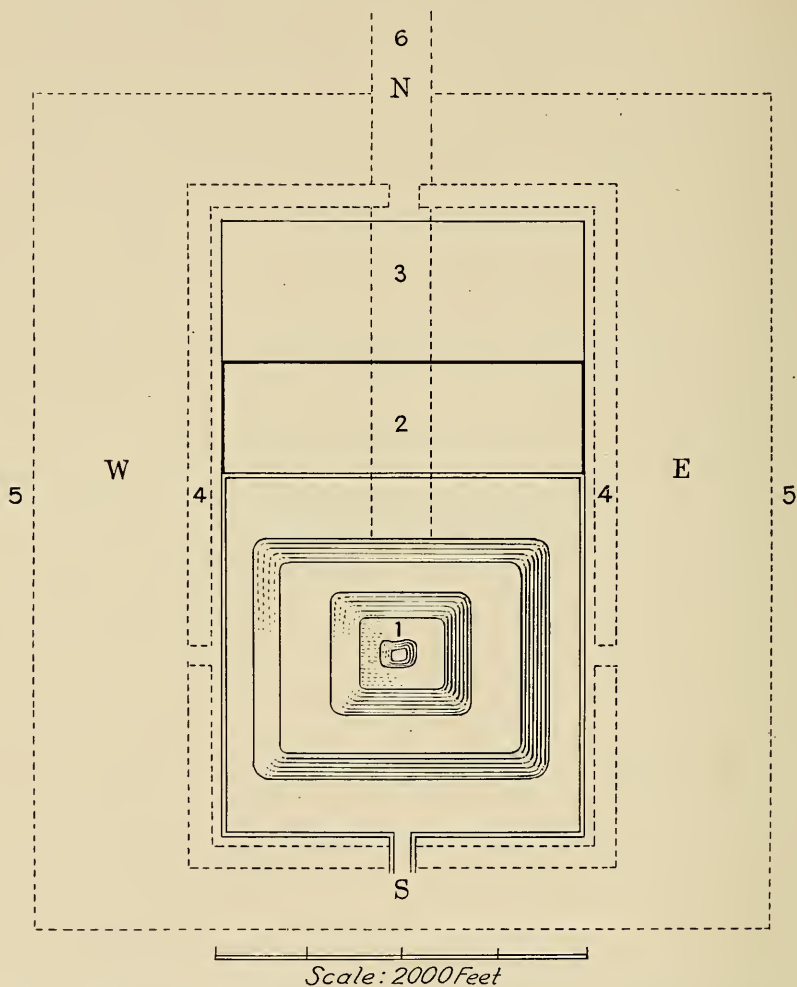


FIG. 18.—Hypothetical reconstruction of grave mound of Ch'in Shih Huang Ti. (See pl. 1, frontispiece.)

During Chou times burial, not cremation, was the general rule. There were, however, exceptions. A few indications exist of a rite of cremation, sometimes accompanied by chariot burial. Mention is made of a group in the northwest (perhaps, however, non-Chinese) who burned their

dead on pyres. And a custom of cremation, apparently not of Buddhist origin, is still practiced by certain Tibeto-Burman tribes of western China.

During the Chou period the important dead, covered with red pigment, were placed in wooden chambers constructed underground. Goods and particularly bronze vessels were buried with them, as well as human beings, although not in such numbers as in the preceding Shang Dynasty. Chariot burials also occurred, as in the west. Burial mounds, usually though not always truncated pyramids of earth, often gigantic in size, were then erected over them (see pl. 1 and figs. 18, 19, and 20).

THE BRONZE AGE REACHES WESTERN JAPAN

Apparently about the close of the Chou period or very shortly thereafter, bronze began to appear in western Japan. It came from the Asiatic continent by two routes, the one through Kyushu, westernmost of the larger islands of the archipelago, the other from Korea to the north-western shores of the main island. The area over which it diffused itself was roughly that bordering the Japanese Inland Sea; it did not extend far beyond the eastern extremity of that body of water.

IRON AGE

IRON APPEARS IN CHINA

The advent of iron in China had no such revolutionary effect on the development of civilization there as had that of bronze, something like a thousand years earlier. It had no immediate influence on the political, social, or economic life of the country, but meant merely the gradual substitution of one metal for another as the superiority of iron over bronze for certain purposes became slowly apparent.

Iron had been well known in the Near East for something like a thousand years before it appeared in China, first perhaps in the Yangtze Valley. The balance of probability seems to be that the knowledge of how to smelt and work iron reached China from northern India. The route it followed was apparently the one traversed by rice, the domestic fowl, and other culture traits almost certainly of Indian origin—in other words, the same region through which passes the highly strategic Burma Road.

At all events we find domestic utensils and agricultural implements being made of iron around 500 B.C. In both the Yellow River and the Yangtze basins, however, that metal only very slowly supplanted bronze as the material for weapons. A similar phenomenon also occurred in Homeric Greece, where bronze continued to be employed for weapons of war long after iron was being used for domestic utensils.

Superior iron ores and abundant wood for charcoal encouraged production of steel in the Yangtze Valley; but in northern China, where wood was scarcer, coal came to be used in the reduction and manufacture of iron.

Long, straight, steel swords, often double-edged and far superior to the old short ones of bronze, appeared in China toward the close of the Chou period. Weapons apparently very similar are shown on the Assyrian monuments of something like 500 years earlier, and were probably carried both east and west by the steppe peoples; in the Occident this type eventually developed into the "Crusader's sword."

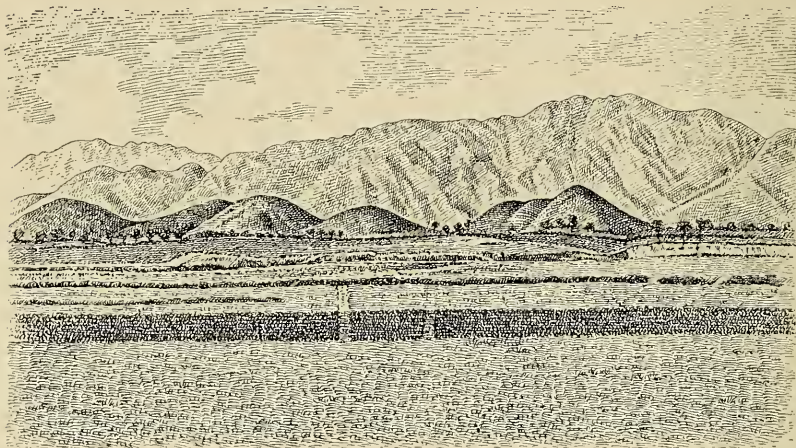


FIG. 19.—Group of ancient grave mounds, northwestern China.

Swords of this type may, too, very possibly have aided the warlike northwestern state of Ch'in in its conquest of all China, late in the third century B.C. These blades seem to have come into general use in China (save in the extreme south, where bronze still lingered), shortly before the commencement of our era.

FALL OF THE CHOU: FIRST CHINESE EMPIRE

During these conquests, Ch'in brought to an ignominious end the very ancient Chou Dynasty, long since lapsed into powerlessness and insignificance. In its stead, toward the close of the third century B.C., the reigning king of Ch'in established a real Chinese Empire.⁸ This he erected

⁸ From the name Ch'in almost certainly comes our own for China. Those who dispute this, on the ground that the latter name appears (in India) before the founding of the Chinese Empire, forget that the *state* of Ch'in had previously annexed the eastern termini of both the two transcontinental routes linking China and the Occident (see map, fig. 1).

on bureaucratic foundations of which traces survive even today. As its absolute ruler he assumed the title "Shih Huang Ti"—"First Emperor." (For a view and plan of the enormous grave mound of this man of genius, see pl. 1, and fig. 18.)

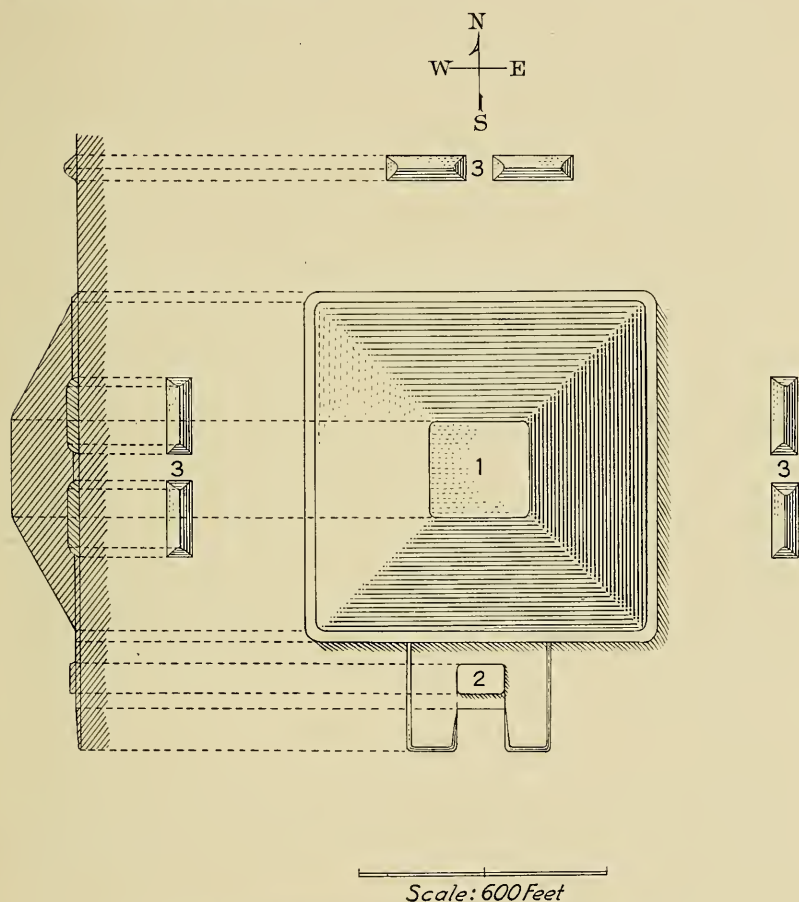


FIG. 20.—Plan and elevation of grave mound of Han Wu Ti.

SPREAD OF IRON TO NEIGHBORING LANDS

Into many adjacent regions, such as southern China, Manchuria, Korea, and western Japan, iron was introduced from northern China, during the early centuries of the Christian Era. In certain of these regions, as we have just seen, bronze had already begun to be used; but there iron soon overtook and superseded it. In other areas, as for example eastern Japan,

where bronze had not yet been adopted, the transition was direct from the Stone Age to that of iron, without the interposition of a Bronze Age at all. This is in fact what has taken place in most parts of the world.

The seaboard region of northern China was still in the hands of non-Chinese peoples until late in the first millennium B.C. For example, the birthplace of Mencius, about the middle of the fourth century B.C., had less than 200 years earlier (i. e., in the time of Confucius) still been in the hands of "barbarians." The assimilation of the coastal populations of northern China by the Chinese civilization seems indeed to have been a cultural rather than a military conquest.

The inhabitants of extreme southern China, perhaps of the Mon-Khmer linguistic stock, were yet in the Bronze Age at the beginning of the Christian Era; but they soon thereafter came under the influence of the Chinese civilization, already in its Iron Age, pushing down from the north.

Southern China.—The numerous waterways and the bold, deeply indented coastline of southern China naturally invited the development of an essentially aquatic mode of life (Bishop, 1934, pp. 316-325; 1938b). Probably even before knowledge of metals had appeared, large dugout canoes were being made (see fig. 15). These, propelled by paddles alone, were nevertheless capable of long voyages along the Asiatic coast. Not, however, until the sail had appeared could penetration of oceanic areas begin.

This southern culture had before the (local) dawn of history spread as far as southern Korea, western Japan, and the East Indian islands. Today it survives in purest and least modified form (though it knows iron) in parts of Borneo and of Indo-China.

Indo-China.—The civilization of Indo-China, though resting basically on a strong aboriginal foundation, was greatly affected by the more advanced ones of both China and India. These began to make themselves felt there around the beginning of the Christian Era, and provided the necessary stimulus for the development of a characteristic form of culture during the first millennium A.D.

Korea.—Northern Korea, too, was drawn increasingly into the Chinese cultural orbit. This tendency was accelerated and augmented, toward the close of the first millennium B.C., by refugees fleeing from disorders in northern China. Also, the great Han emperor Wu Ti (see fig. 20), late in the second century B.C., established a Chinese colony in northern Korea which survived for several hundred years; while an independent kingdom with a civilization of Bronze Age type arose about the same time or perhaps a little later in the southeastern part of the peninsula. Both

colony and kingdom became important secondary centers from which civilizing influences spread over much of eastern Asia.

Japan.—Toward the close of the Chou period again, a stream of cultural influences from around the mouth of the Yangtze River reached Kyushu, in western Japan. In that country it encountered other streams, from Korea and even from southern Manchuria, and intermingled with them to form the historical Japanese civilization. The latter also thus owed its origin and stimulus entirely to the continent of Asia, especially to China.

The founder of the Japanese imperial line, the "official" Japanese accounts tell us, was descended from the Sun Goddess, and conquered the western part of the archipelago.⁹ At that time and for long afterward, central and eastern Japan remained in the hands of the Ainu aborigines, then (from their remains) still in the Neolithic stage of culture but gradually absorbing more advanced elements of civilization from their invaders and ultimate conquerors.

The very brief and partial Bronze Age culture of western Japan was thus soon superseded by an Iron Age civilization of continental origin, which by the close of the first millennium A.D. had overspread the entire archipelago save its extreme northern portion.

The Japanese Early Iron Age (the so-called Dolmen Period) was characterized by burial in megalithic chambers or dolmens over which great mounds were erected; by the form of steel sword used; by fighting on horseback with the bow and arrow; and by many other traits, most of them Chinese in origin but others pointing in the direction of central Asia and even of the Occident. (Sansom, 1932.)

SUMMARY

Let us now recapitulate. Forms of man have occupied eastern Asia from very ancient times—from the early Pleistocene period at least—for "Peking man," one of the most primitive human types yet found, dates from that remote epoch.

Paleolithic (Old Stone Age) man later appeared in northern China, Mongolia, the extreme south of Asia, and perhaps Japan. He may also, there is some reason to suspect, have spread to the Philippines while those islands were still attached to the continent of Asia, and have survived there for a long time.

⁹ The date claimed by the Japanese for the founding of their imperial line, 660 B.C., is of course absurd. The actual time seems to have been about the commencement of our era, and reliable and continuous Japanese history does not begin until considerably later still.

Later yet, though still long before the dawn of history, various forms of Neolithic (New Stone Age) cultures spread all over the Far East, where they are divisible into two fundamental classes, a northern and a southern. These both agree however in deriving their subsistence from planting, eked out in the one case by hunting, in the other by fishing. They had thus both already passed far beyond the stage of mere food gathering and had become food producing. Probably toward the second



FIG. 21.—Map of China, showing the eighteen provinces.

half of the third millennium B.C. there appeared in northern China, near the eastern end of the "corridor of the steppes," a more advanced culture, still Neolithic or New Stone Age in character—that is, quite without metals—but possessing a painted pottery that has been likened to similar forms of ware found in southeastern Europe. Not long afterward, again, probably around 2000 B.C. there arose in the same general region a Chalcolithic period, with the first evidence of bronze in China.

A little later still—toward the middle of the second millennium B.C., for we have now reached the protohistoric era—we find in the Yellow River basin a highly developed civilization of Bronze Age type, based on

almost the same set of fundamental elements as had been the far more ancient river valley civilizations of the Near East. This new culture—of its origin we as yet know nothing—slowly diffused itself until toward the middle of the following millennium it overspread most of northern China.

It then went on to penetrate various marginal areas, notably southern China, Korea, and western Japan. Soon afterward, however, it yielded place in turn to an Age of Iron (of rather archaic type, it is true, compared with the one that had already come into being in the Near East over half a millennium before).

Thus our survey reveals to us one outstanding fact, viz, that as civilization advanced in the Old World, it developed not one but two great centers of culture diffusion—the Near East on the one hand, China on the other. The latter country has in fact played a civilizing role in eastern Asia quite worthy of comparison with the better-known one assumed in the Occident by Babylonia and Egypt, by Greece and Rome.

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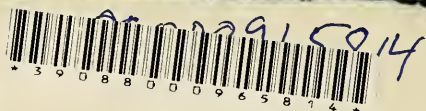
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